

ORIENT ODYSSEY 2009

Tour Code: BHF

# 15 Day BHUTAN

## Hidden Face of the Thunder Dragon Land

USA – Paro – Thimphu – Punakha – Gangtey / Phobjikha – Trongsa – Bumthang / Jakar –  
Ura – 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 and **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		
May 2, 2009 Ura Festival Jun 24, 2009 Nimalung Festival	4699	4499	4860	4660	3876	771
Sep 27, 2009 Thangbi Mani Dec 20, 2009 Trongsa Festival	5199	4999	5380	5180	4386	857

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 and special TREK itineraries are available! 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 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 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. 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



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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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. **F/L/D**

#### **Day05 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 12<sup>th</sup> century by Lama Gyalwa



Lhanampa. 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

#### **Day06 Thimphu – Punakha (4,000 feet)**

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



#### **Day07 Punakha – Gangtey / Phobjikha Valley (9,800 feet) – Trongsa (7,300 feet)**

This morning we enjoy an early breakfast and start our journey to Trongsa. On route, we will stop at the [Wangduephodrang Dzong](#), built in 1638 by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. With a strategic location, it completely covers the spur and commands an impressive view over all directions. Our driving journey today will take approximately 5 – 6 hours. Following the [Dang Chu](#) (river) toward its source, we climb steadily through semi-tropical vegetation. Banana plants



and cactus eventually give way to pine forests and then to an alpine environment of rhododendron and dwarf bamboo. Look for [grey langur monkeys](#), often spotted on this portion of the drive. After crossing [Pele La](#) (11,286 feet),

we enter the [Gangtey / Phobjikha valley](#), one of the few glacial valleys in Bhutan. It is encircled by pine-covered mountains. We [drive by](#) the impressive [Gangteng Gompa](#) (now nearing the end of a massive renovation project). The head lama of Gangtem Gompa is the ninth incarnation of the body of Pemalingpa, a famous 14<sup>th</sup> century



blacksmith from Bumthang who is one of Bhutan's most famous Buddhist saints and teachers. We will enjoy the [picnic lunch](#) and spend

some time in this magnificent valley. The forests surrounding the valley are full of birds and mammals alike. The *Black Mountain National Park* (of which Phobjikha valley is a part) links up with *Royal Manas National Park* to the south, creating [a territory of alpine, temperate and subtropical ecosystems](#). The combined reserve is home to a wide array of species including: tiger, red panda, Himalayan black bear, gaur, leopard cat, wild pig and varieties of birds including monal pheasant and four sub-species of hornbills. The area is equally famous as the winter home to the very rare [black-necked crane](#). Experts estimate that fewer than 6,000 cranes exist in the wild. The cranes arrive in Phobjikha from their summer feeding grounds in Tibet and Ladakh, and can be viewed from mid-November through March. We then continue the drive. Our first view of [Trongsa Dzong](#), the largest dzong in Bhutan, comes from across the valley. However, the road stretches another 20 kilometers before reaching Trongsa. We overnight at the superior, *Yangkhil Resort*. [B/SL/D](#)

#### **Day08 Trongsa – Bumthang / Jakar**

This morning we will explore the [Trongsa Dzong](#), built in 1644 by Choegyal Minjur Tempa.



It is still the most impressive dzong in the country, showcasing the aesthetic and magnificent works of the Bhutanese architecture. We explore its intricate maze of buildings and temples where there are wondrous views down to the river valley. A 2 – 3

hour drive from Trongsa brings us to Bumthang. We across two more mountain passes – [Yutong La](#) (11,155 feet) and [Kiki La](#) (9,515 feet) –

before entering Jakar. The first of the four valleys that comprise Bumthang is [Chume Valley](#). In the [village of Zugney](#) we visit a [Yathra weaving center](#). Yathra is the name of the locally-produced woolen cloth. Unique patterns and bright, earthy colors distinguish this fabric which is used throughout Bhutan. We reach *Kaila Guest House*, a rustic but comfortable Bhutanese-style lodge. Spend rest of the day to explore the [town of Jakar](#) and visit [Jakar Dzong](#) in the evening. Also called the “[Fortress of the White Bird](#)”, it is now home to the administration office of the Jakar district and the district monk body. [B/L/D](#)

#### **Day09 Ura Festival**

Today is the highlight of our journey! We enjoy an excursion to Ura and join [the grand celebration of Ura Tshechu](#). 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. [B/L/D](#)

#### **Day10 Bumthang / Jakar**

We have a full day to enjoy the [Bumthang Valley](#), noted as one of the most beautiful and sacred in Bhutan. The history of this valley is replete with the visits of Padmasambhava as he brought the Buddha's message to Bhutan. He meditated in many local caves that now have



temples and shrines associated with them. Our first stop is the [Jambay Lhakhang](#). Legend says it is one of the 108 temples built in a day across the

Himalayas by the Tibetan King Songtsen Goenpo, who was also believed to be the reincarnation of Buddha of Compassion. Out of 108, only three remains today. Two are in Bhutan – the [Jambay Lhakhang](#) and [Kyichu Lhakhang](#). Another one is in Lhasa, Tibet - the

Jokhang, next to the Potala Palace. These temples were said to be built to pin down an ogress who was causing hindrance to the spread of Buddhism in the Himalayas. Our next stop is [Kyichu Lhakhang](#), which consists of three temples. The first one was built on the site of a cave containing a rock with body imprint of Guru Rinpoche, and is considered the most holy. The second one was built by the first king of Bhutan, His Late Majesty Ugyen Wangchuck. The third one is a spectacular new monastery built in traditional style, by the present Royal Queen Mother, Her Majesty Azhl Kesang Choeden Wangchuck. All three together are surrounded by 108 small choetens (Buddhist Stupas) forming a retaining wall, symbolic of each joint of the human body. From Kyichu, we begin our rambles through [the countryside](#), crossing a [footbridge](#) over rushing [Chamkhar Chu](#) and wending our way through the [ripening paddy fields](#) to [Tamzhing](#). Tamzhing was founded in 1501 by one of Bhutan's most famous saints, Pemalingpa, "[the treasure discoverer](#)". We end our walk with a visit to the [Swiss Project](#) – an industrious complex producing cheese, beer, apple juice, and honey. Don't forget to try the soft Gouda cheese! **B/L/D**



**Day11 Jakar – Wandiphodrang / Punakha**  
 After an early breakfast, we embark for the return drive west. On route we will visit the [Ta Dzong](#), the [ancient watchtower](#) above Trongsa. It is an excellent example of the [medieval fortresses](#) that controlled Bhutan well into the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Inside is a small chapel dedicated to King Gesar, an epic hero of Tibetan history. We cross [Pela La](#) (11,286 feet) the second time and enjoy a picnic lunch at [Chendibji Chorten](#), an ancient shrine built on the old walking path that runs across the country. Today's drive takes approximately 5-6 hours. We will reach the market town of Wangdiphodrang / Punakha (4,400 feet). Check-in at the superior, family run, [Hotel Y. T.](#) for a well deserved dinner and night's rest. **B/L/D**



## Day12 Punakha – Paro

Early morning we hike through the rice fields to [Khamsum Yuelay Namgyal Choeten](#), where we enjoy an stunning view of the [Punakha valley](#). We then stop at the impressive [Punakha Dzong](#). Punakha is the ancient capital of Bhutan. Its massive dzong sits at the confluence of the Po (male) and Mo (female) rivers. It was built by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal in 1637. Now it is the [winter home of the Cnetral Monk Body](#). The monks move from Thimphu to Punakha for winter as the lower elevation creates more temperate climates. We will admire the [fine Bhutanese architecture](#), and the [spectacular murals adorned virtually every surface](#). The massive wood building was constructed completely by hand and without a single nail! We then drive west to Paro. The scenic drive takes us through lovely valleys, passing villages, towns and farm houses. We again cross [Dochu La](#) for a second chance to see the Bhutanese Himalaya, if the weather is clear. We make a brief stop in Thimphu to stretch our legs. Enjoy a short [stroll on the street of Thimphu](#). This evening we arrive in Paro and check-in at the superior, traditional styled, [Hotel Gangtey Palace](#). **B/L/D**



## Day13 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, [Taksang 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 \(Taksang Cafeteria\)](#), 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 Taksang 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 7<sup>th</sup> 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 a giant ogress who was thwarting the establishment of Buddhism into Tibet. [B/SL/D](#)

**Day14 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.. Overnight at the 4 star deluxe [Century Park Hotel](#). Enjoy a restful evening. Get ready for tomorrow’s long flight home. [B](#)

**Day15 Bangkok – USA**

Savor the memory of our **Bhutan journey** that unveils the hidden face of the Thunder Dragon Land. We board our homebound flight, arriving 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*

<p>For inquiry, please feel free to call</p> <p><b>1-800-637-5778</b></p> <p><b>ORIENT ODYSSEY</b></p> <p>1385 Gulf Road, Suite 203 Point Roberts, WA 98281</p> <p>Tel: 1-800-637-5778, Fax: 1-800-564-8893</p> <p>E-mail: <a href="mailto:info@orientodyssey.com">info@orientodyssey.com</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.orientodyssey.com">www.orientodyssey.com</a></p>
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