

ORIENT ODYSSEY 2010

Tour Code: BHF

15 Day BHUTAN IN-DEPTH

Hidden Face of the Thunder Dragon Land

USA – Paro – Thimphu – Punakha – Gangtey / Phobjikha – Trongsa – Bumthang / Jakar –
Ura – Wangdue – Paro – USA

*****Guaranteed escorted SMALL group with min. of 3, and max. of 10 travelers***
Premium service with English speaking escorts and exclusive behind scene visits**

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

Guaranteed Departures 2010 Apr 16 – Ura Festival Jun 15 – Nimalung Festival Sep 12 – Tamshing Festival Sep 16 – Thangbi Festival Dec 09 – Trongsa Festival	FULL PACKAGE Includes int'l airfare from USA Please inquire for special rates for departures from other US cities		LAND ONLY Not include the int'l airfare Own arrangement for flights USA – Bangkok– USA (Flights between Bangkok and Paro are included)	Single Supplement
	Los Angeles	New York		
	5540	5702		

***Choose your own departure dateand enjoy VIP Private Journey – accompanied by a private English speaking guide, a chauffeur and an air conditioned car exclusively (based on min. of 3 passengers)! There is no additional cost!**

For full package with int'l airfare, US tax and fuel surcharge of \$188, Bhutan government tax and fees of \$ 132 per person is extra
 LAND ONLY packages is not subject to US tax / fuel. Only the Bhutan government tax and fees of \$ 132 per person will apply.
 Rates for departures from other major US gateway cities are available upon request.

*Private journey can be operated for 2 passengers. Please add \$380 per person.

*Private journey can also be operated for 1 passengers. Please add \$480 per person.

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, 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)

Today we depart via *Druk Air* flight KB121, leaving at 6:50 a.m.. As we near Bhutan and if the weather is clear, we can see the massive peaks of the eastern Himalaya, including Kanchenchunga (third highest mountain in the world) and Bhutan's holy mountain, Chomolhari. 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, traditionally styled **Gangtey Palace Hotel**. Kingdom of Bhutan offers the rare chance to wander about in naturally intact landscapes with up to date amenities close at hand. And 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 of the day



is the **National Museum**, a circular fortress that once protected this 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 Rimpung Dzong** with its impressive **watchtower** commanding sweeping views of the valley below. Bhutan’s *dzongs* originally served three purposes: as a fortress, an administrative center of local government, and a residence and focus for the



monk’s religious activity. 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 the famous 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, interact with local residents. F/L/D

Day04 Paro - Thimphu

This morning we set out for **Thimphu**, the capital of Kingdom of Bhutan. The drive starts along the winding road following the **Pa Chu** (river) downstream to its confluence with the **Wang Chu**, then up valley to Thimphu, the capital. As the largest city – with a population of approximately 70,000 – Thimphu is Bhutan’s “Big Apple”! With the seat of the royal government, homes of the royal family, and main offices for international aid organizations located here, Thimphu is a mix of Himalayan and Western sensibilities. We check-in at the

superior, **River View Hotel**. Today is Sunday. **Orient Odyssey** had carefully planned the tour logistics so we are able to visit a colorful **weekend market**, held beyond the parade ground north of **Changlimithang stadium**. Each weekend, villagers from the outlying areas cart their wares and produce to here. The market provides **a wonderful opportunity to mingle with the Bhutanese**. The variety of foodstuff is astounding, consisting primarily of vegetables and grain produced in the nearby valleys but also including some of the more exotic tropical fruits from the steamy lowlands. At the



northern end of the market, one can often find locally produced handicrafts including religious objects, textiles and hats from various minority groups. Although generally for local consumption, vendors are more than happy to sell to foreigners. **Photo opportunities** abound in the jostling throng. 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**. We then tour 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 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

Day05 Thimphu

This morning we begin our sightseeing at **Bhutan Post**. Well known among the philatelists, Bhutan’s colorful stamps are among the

country's delightful and most sought-after exports. We then tour the [Textile Museum](#) and the [Folk Heritage Museum](#), both sponsored by her majesty the Queen. Here we can obtain the interesting insight into rural Bhutanese life, and traditional arts and crafts. We will also visit 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 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 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 set out for [central Bhutan](#), heading east over the [Dochu La](#) (la means "pass") at 10,171 feet. When in good

weather, the pass offers the [magnificent views](#) of surrounding 200 miles of formidable [Himalayan summits](#). Enjoy tea at an observation station and take in the unforgettable sights. Nearby is a massive [Choeten](#) (Buddhist pagoda) surrounded by 108 smaller ones. Thousands of [prayer flags](#) rustles in the wind. On our descent from the pass we note a dramatic change in vegetation. At the lower elevations, cactus, banana plants, poinsettia and other semi-tropical plants dominate the landscape. After a few hours, we reach the [green terraced 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 monk" Drukpa Kinley. This region was the stomping ground (nearly 500 years ago) of this rather unconventional character, who taught Buddhist dharma by employing an often shockingly ribald sense of humor. The landscape is dotted with evidence of his abiding influence, and legends of his exploits are still today by local villagers. 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 generally 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 14th 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 Choegyul 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. **Francoise Pommaret**, describing their Chaucerian atmosphere, writes that “*the festivals offer Bhutanese an opportunity to become immersed in the meaning of their religion but they are also occasions for seeking*



people and being seen. People bring their finest clothes, their most beautiful jewels; they take out picnics rich with meat and

alcohol. Men and women joke and flirt. An atmosphere of convivial, slightly ribald good humor prevails.” 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 on 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-20th 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 set out to make a pilgrimage to one of the most important religious sites in the Himalaya, [Taktsang Lhakhang](#), known as The [Tiger's Nest](#). This magical monastery clings to a vertical granite cliff 2,000 feet above the valley floor. The legend of Taktsang dates back to 747 AD when Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava), in the wrathful form of Guru Dorji Droloe, is believed to have flown here on the back of a tiger to subdue the evil spirits of the region.

Tantric Buddhist mythology tells that the vanquished spirits were transformed into protectors of the dharma. One of them, Singye Samdrup, is recognized today as the guardian deity of Taktsang. We first [hike along a trail](#) that



slowly rises above the valley. After about an hour we reach a [ridge at 9,200 ft.](#) Enjoy a rest at a [small tea house](#) ([Taktsang Cafeteria](#)), where we can have a wonderful panoramic view of the temple. 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 [Drukgyel Dzong](#) (8,100 feet), built in 1649 to commemorate the victory of the Bhutanese armies over the Tibetan intruders. It is a [tranquil village](#) of eight farmhouses and four temples. The main temple complex is situated on the cliff just above [Bondey Valley](#). Like Taktsang, this is an area in which Guru Rinpoche meditated in the 8th century. On route we stop at the 7th century [Kyichu Lhakhang](#), a small jewel-like palace that belongs to the royal family of Bhutan. Designed after the celestial paradise of Padmasambhava, the building was completed in the late 1800s. No alterations have been made to the structure or the beautiful carvings and paintings within the palace since. Tonight we will enjoy a [farewell dinner](#) to celebrate our last evening in the Kingdom. **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 Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia or India and Nepal! Please contact us for more information.

***International Flights**

Orient Odyssey features [Asiana Airlines](#), [Korean Airlines](#), [Eva Air](#), [Japan Airlines](#), [China Airlines](#), or [Northwest 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):

KE012	Los Angeles – Seoul	0010 / 0510
KE651	Seoul – Bangkok	1740 / 2110
KE652	Bangkok – Seoul	2240 / 0600
KE017	Seoul – Los Angeles	1500 / 1030

From New York (JFK):

KE082	JFK – Seoul	1400 / 1735
KE653	Seoul – Bangkok	1930 / 2300
KE6524	Bangkok – Seoul	0030 / 0750
KE085	Seoul – JFK	1930 / 2010

***Note**

Fuel surcharges and taxes are subject to change. Updated and accurate amount will be advised before the ticketing deadline. Tour cost is quoted based on current foreign exchange rate as of November 1, 2009. Price is guaranteed once full payment is received.

Kindly refer to General Terms & Conditions

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