**Detailed Itinerary – Punakha Pre-Trip Extension**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Day** | **Itinerary** |
| Thursday, 10/18/18 | Pre-extension participants arrive in Paro\*[[1]](#footnote-1) where we’ll be met by our outfitter’s representative and transferred by van to Thimphu (1hr 20 mins), sightseeing in Thimphu as time allows. Once arrived at Thimphu Hotel, you will check in and rest due to your jet lags or plane rides. After lunch the sightseeing as follows:  **Takin Preserve,** which is the national animal only found in Bhutan. This is an extremely rare member of the goat family. Found in herds in the very high altitudes (13,125ft and over). They live on a diet of grass and bamboo. It can weigh as much as 550 pounds.  **Changangkha Lhakhang** (temple): Changangkha Lhakhang is an old fortress like temple and monastic school perched on a ridge above Thimphu. It was established in the 12th century on a site chosen by Lama Phajo Drukgom Shigpo, who came from Ralung in Tibet. The central statue is Chenresig in an 11-headed, thousand-armed manifestation (God of compassion). There are enormous prayer wheels to spin and even the prayer books in the temple are larger in size than usual Tibetan texts  Drive to visit the **Statue of Shakyamuni Buddha** (51.5mt bronze), sitting on top of Kuensel Phodrang hill. This site offers unobstructed views over the Thimphu Valley.  In the evening, visit the impressive **Tashicho-Dzong/fortress** which houses the throne room of the King and various government offices.  It is also the summer residence of the Chief Abbot and the central monk body. If your visit falls on a working weekday, arrive in time to watch the hoisting of the National Flag and the March of the Guards. (Open Mon-Fri: Mar-Oct 5-6pm & Nov-Feb 4-5 pm / Open on Sat, Sun, Govt. Holidays*) Overnight at Thimphu Hotel.* |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Day** | **Itinerary** |
| Friday 10/19/18 | Transfer to Punakha (2hrs 25 mins), sightsee in the Punakha Valley including historic **Punakha Dzong, Chimi Lhakhang** (temple of fertility) and picturesque local villages in this stunning valley (details TBD). Overnight at Punakha. |
| Saturday, 10/20/18 | After breakfast we will drive 12 km north of Punakha and hike to **Khamsum Yuelley Namgyal Chorten**, a fine example of Bhutanese architecture and artistic traditions. An hour hike to the Chorten, through a moderately inclined trail surrounded by pine trees, this site offers beautiful view of the Punakha Valley. The Chorten built to remove negative forces and promote peace, stability and harmony in the changing world dominates the upper Punakha Valley with commanding views across the Mo Chhu and up towards the mountainous peaks of Gasa and beyond.  A fine example of Bhutanese architecture and artistic traditions, the Khamsum Yuelley Namgyal Chorten stands out on a beautiful ridge above the Punakha valley. This 4-storey temple was built by Her Majesty the Queen Mother, Ashi Tshering Yangdon Wangchuk as per the Holy Scriptures and took 9 years to complete it. This temple has been dedicated for the wellbeing of the kingdom, its people and all sentient beings.  **Then rafting** on the Mo-Chhu river and the Pho-Chhu rivers with visits to several cultural sites along the way. Overnight at Punakha. |
| Sunday, 10/21/18 | Pre-extension participants drive back to Paro (3 hrs. 25 mins), meet the other participants arriving from Bangkok and Kathmandu[[2]](#footnote-2). Evening visit to Paro market and town. Overnight at the hotel in Paro. |

**Detailed Itinerary – Main Jomolhari Bhutan Trek**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Day** | **Itinerary** |
| Sunday, 10/21/18 | New arrivals will be met by our outfitter’s representative and transferred to our hotel to meet up with the pre-trek extension group, after completion of arrival formalities. Evening visit to Paro market and town. Overnight at the hotel in Paro. |
| Monday, 10/22/18 | Today will have Thimphu Excursion to visit **The Folk Heritage Museum**, a restored mid 19th century house which gives one insight into the average household & lifestyle in the region during that era. (closed on Sat 1pm, Sun 1pm, Govt. Holidays) Change cash at the bank.  **Institute for Zorig Chusum** (commonly known as the Painting School), where a six-year training course is given in the 13 traditional arts and crafts of Bhutan. (closed on Sat 1pm, Sun, Govt Holidays, Summer/winter break)  **Thangtong Dewachen Nunnery**; the only nunnery in the Capital it is popularly known as Zilukha Anim Dratshang. Located few minutes’ drive from the town. It was built in 1976 by Drubthob Rikey Jigdrel (the 16th emanation of Thangtong Gyalpo who built temples and iron chain bridges). You may interact with some 60 nuns who have devoted their life to spirituality and Buddhism.  **Memorial Chorten**. The building of this landmark was originally envisaged by Bhutan’s third king, His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuk, who had wanted to erect a monument to world peace and prosperity. Completed in 1974 after his untimely death, it is both a memorial to the Late King (“the father of modern Bhutan”), and a monument to peace.  **Traditional Handmade Paper Factory**, witness the process from start to finish. The paper is made from the barks of the black Daphne tree. The thicker paper is used for scriptures and the thinner ones are used for wrapping gifts and various other purposes. (**transfer back to Paro overnight).** |
| Tuesday, 10/23/18 | Hike to **Tiger’s Nest Monastery** (Taktsang Gompa – 10,232ft), the birthplace of Bhutanese Buddhism and one of the most iconic sights in Bhutan.  Then drive to **Shana**, village where we will start our trek the next day – camp. Max altitude 10,232, sleep altitude 9415. |
| Wednesday, 10/24/18 | **Trek Shana – Soi Thangthangkha**, following the Pa Chu (Paro river), ascending and descending through lush pine, oak and spruce and then rhododendron forests. Camp. Max altitude and sleep altitude 12,300’ |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Day** | **Itinerary** |
| Thursday, 10/25/18 | **Trek Soi Thangthangkha to Jangothang**, following the river above tree line with stunning views of the surrounding peaks. Lunch at a yak herder’s camp, then short walk into the valley to our campsite, with superb views of Chomolhari and Jichu Drake. Max and sleep altitude 13,250’. |
| Friday, 10/26/18 | **Jangothang rest day**, with opportunity to visit the nearby lakes and climb to more broad views of the mountains. Sleep altitude 13,250’. |
| Saturday, 10/27/18 | **Trek Jangothang to Lingshi**. Climb to a ridge with breathtaking views of Chomolhari, Jichu Drake and Tserimgang, then cross a valley and climb to Nyele-la pass (4,700m) with grand views of nearby 7000m peaks. Descend gradually from the pass to our camp at Lingshi, with panoramic view of the mountain peaks and Lingshi Dzong. Max altitude 15,410’, sleeping altitude 13,120. |
| Sunday, 10/28/18 | **Trek Lingshi to Shodu**. Ascend the deep Mo Chu valley, cross the river, then climbs steeply for two hours to Yeli-la (4,820m). On a clear day you can see Chomolhari, Gangchenta, Tserimgang and Masagang from this pass. Descend to our camp in a meadow at Shodu (4,100m) with a Chorten (shrine). Max altitude 15,810’, sleeping altitude 13,448. |
| Monday, 10/29/18 | **Trek Shodu to Barshong**. Back at the tree line, and we descend along the Thimphu Chu, through rhododendron, juniper and mixed alpine forests with stunning views of rocky cliff faces and waterfalls along the way. Then climb to the ruins of Barshong Dzong (3,600m) and our camp. Max altitude 13,448’, sleeping altitude 11,801’. |
| Tuesday, 10/30/18 | **Trek Barshong to Dolam Kencho**. Descend through rhododendron, birch and conifers, dropping steeply to meet the Thimphu Chu. Descend along the river, then climb around a cliff face high above the Thimphu Chu, coming out in pastureland at 3600’. Meet our transport and drive to **Thimphu** (7656’). Overnight at hotel in Thimphu. Max altitude 11,800’, sleeping altitude 7656’. |
| Wednesday, 10/31/18 | **Will have Paro excursion**. Morning visit to **Ta Dzong**, built in 1651 as a watchtower and in 1968 inaugurated as Bhutan’s National Museum.  Below Ta Dzong is **Rinpung Dzong** (Paro Dzong), “the fortress of the heap of jewels”, built in 1646, now housing district administration and Paro’s monks.  Afternoon visit to **Kyichu Lhakhang**, one of the oldest (7th century) and most sacred shrines of Bhutan.  Back to Thimphu for our farewell dinner at **Yang Restaurant**, Thimphu with **cultural show**. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Day** | **Itinerary** |
| Thursday, 11/1/18 | We’ll get up early this day to go into the National Stadium and watch the festivities for the coronation of King Jigme Khesar Namgyel (could be standing room only, but should be really interesting and fun!) Then drive to Paro (1 hr 20 mins) and board our flight at 3:40PM to Bagdogra, arriving at 3:55PM (time chg), and Julie and Jacque will continue on to Bangkok on that plane arriving at 9:05PM. |

1. Bill, Sharon, Nina, Jim, Shuko, Robert, Cheryl Sack, Todd, Luciana and Cheryl Talbert are on the pre-extension, arriving to Paro from Bangkok at 8:35AM on the 18th [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Julie and Patti will arrive to Paro from Kathmandu at 10:20A; Jacque, Faith and Jay will arrive to Paro from Bangkok at 8:35AM [↑](#footnote-ref-2)