

# MAJESTIC BHUTAN

## PHOTO TOUR

led by  
John Greengo & Michelle Greengo

**FEBRUARY 16<sup>TH</sup> - FEBRUARY 26<sup>TH</sup> 2024**

## ITINERARY



**JOHN GREENGO** | PHOTOGRAPHY





# MAJESTIC BHUTAN

## PHOTO TOUR

**FEBRUARY 16-26, 2024**

Bhutan is a country where mountainous beauty meets ancient culture. This remote land, that measures success in terms of 'Gross National Happiness', awaits you and your camera.

Also known as 'The Land of the Thunder Dragon', Bhutan will capture your heart and inspire your creativity with stunning photographic opportunities that range from precariously perched cliffside dzongs to the vibrantly colorful Tshechu Festival. During this trip, we'll be capturing images of those who worship and live in ancient temples and Monasteries. The unique cultural heritage that has remained intact due to isolation until the mid-20th century continues to be preserved through traditions steeped in Buddhist heritage.

This is a photographic adventure you won't want to miss.

### Day 0

Depart your home town.

### Day 1

Feb 16

### Bangkok, Thailand

After arriving in Bangkok, take the airport shuttle to the pre-arranged Bangkok accommodation (included in trip price). Settle in, grab a bite to eat and then join us for the evening meet n' greet and tour briefing. John and Michelle look forward to meeting everyone.

Though your excitement may be building, we encourage a good nights rest. Tomorrow is an early start.





## Day 2

Feb 17

### Bangkok - Thimphu

BLD

The day is started with an early morning flight, soaring above the spectacular Himalayan mountain range, on our way to Paro, Bhutan. If the skies are clear, we'll be able to see and photograph the world's highest peaks. As we descend into Paro Valley keep your eyes on the view out the window. You'll see farms and mountain goats welcoming us.

Upon arrival in Paro, we leave directly from the airport with our local guides and head for Thimphu - a 1.5 hour scenic drive away. On our way we'll visit the Tachogang Monastery and the iconic iron chain bridge, built in the 1400s by the great Tibetan saint, Thangtong Gyalpo. Best known as the founder of the Tibetan opera, Thangtong Gyalpo was also a great Buddhist master, yogi, physician, blacksmith and an architect.

Arriving in Thimphu we check into our hotel and grab lunch. We then spend the rest of the day at sights around Thimphu, most notably The Memorial Stupa and the riverside market. Those of you who are seeking some more action for the day can join John in an evening stroll around the town and by the river.



## Day 3

Feb 18

### Thimphu

BLD

We dive into the Bhutanese culture today, specifically the educational part of Bhutan. Firstly we visit the monastic school of Dechen Phodrang Monastery (Palace of Great Bliss) and attend a morning ceremony undertaken by the young resident monks.

After a well-earned breakfast back at the hotel, we attend the 13 Arts & Craft school. This institute, commonly known as 'the painting school', operates four- to six-year courses that provide instruction in Bhutan's 13 traditional arts. The craft demonstrations are a photographer's dream. There is also the opportunity to purchase pieces made by the students.

Later in the day we'll visit the largest Bronze Buddha, popularly known as Buddha Point. The 51.5 meter statue is three storied with several chapels. The body of the Buddha is filled with 125,000 smaller statues of Buddha.



**Day 4**

**Feb 19**

**Thimphu - Punakha**

**BLD**

We depart Thimphu and commence our drive to Punakha (about 2 hours drive). On our way, we will stop at Dochu La Pass for its majestic view of the Eastern Himalayas. The pass offers a stunning 360-degree panoramic view of the Himalayan mountain range. The view is especially beautiful on clear winter days when the snow-capped mountains form a majestic backdrop to the tranquility of the Druk Wangyal Chortens - the 108 chortens gracing the mountain pass.

After lunch, we stretch our legs on a walk to the Fertility Temple (Chimi Lhakhang), a Buddhist monastery located near the village of Sopsokha.

Arriving in Punakha, we check into our hotel and then take another walk to a charming village a short distance from the hotel.

**Day 5**

**Feb 20**

**Punakha**

**BLD**

Get excited about the first day of the Tshechu, a Bhutanese festival! The festival is held in Punakha Dzong, perhaps the most striking dzong in the country with its richly painted gold, red, and black carved wood. The dzong is also unique in that it has three docheys (courtyards) instead of the usual two. Locals gather from afar each year to partake in the festivities and celebrate their heritage. It is a day of activity, color, and history, as we witness cultural performers donning traditional clothes and masks.

After lunch we drive to Wolokha Sangchen Dorji Lhendrup Nunnery, a meditation center for over 100 nuns. In addition to serving as a religious education center, the complex aims to offer life skill training including Thangka painting, embroidery, tailoring, and sculpting.



**Day 6**

**Feb 21**

**Punakha - Gangtey**

**BLD**

There is so much to see at the Tshechu that we return for a 2nd morning. The festival stalls outside the dzong are also a great opportunity for mixing with, and photographing the locals or maybe you could visit one or two of the other temples.

On the road again, we visit Rinchengang Village, one of the oldest villages in Bhutan dating back to Zhabdrung's era before continuing our drive to Gangtey. Arriving late in the afternoon, for those with unspent energy we have a photo walk prior to dinner.

Time today will also be devoted to a photo sharing session. It's quite fascinating to see the different aspects of Bhutan from your fellow travelers' point of view.



**Day 7**

**Feb 22**

**Gangtey**

**BLD**

Get ready for immersing yourself in Bhutan's nature as we take a 2-hour hike from the hotel to Gangtey Monastery. Our journey will pass through crane habitats, pine forests, working farms, and timeless village houses, at times surrounded by prayer flags. You are rewarded at the end of your hike with the Gangtey Gonpa, a monastery built towards the end of the 1400's. The resident monks can often be seen taking part in chanting or rituals happening at prayer time.

After lunch we head to the remote area of Phobjikha (Valley of the Cranes) and visit the Shechen Ngenlung Drechaling Nunnery. The nunnery provides an education for the young girls and women who are just entering monastic life. The girls are taught by elder nuns from Shechen and educated in both monastic and secular subjects.



**Day 8**

**Feb 23**

**Gangtey - Thimphu**

**BLD**

In the morning we commence our return to Thimphu. Enroute we stop at the breathtaking Pele La and Lawa La passes, taking advantage of the distant mountain views. We have lunch and then continue our drive to Thimphu, stopping along the way at scenic overlooks in the Dochula Pass, allowing time for making stops when impromptu photographic opportunities present themselves.

Following our arrival in Thimphu, if time allows, we may end the day with an evening photo shoot.



**Day 9**

**Feb 24**

**Thimphu - Paro**

**BLD**

A pre-sunrise visit to a local Buddha statue starts the day, following a return to the hotel for breakfast. We then travel from Thimphu back to Paro, sightseeing along the way. Once in Paro we visit some of their main cultural places of interest. Bhutan's National Museum, located inside Ta Dzong, showcases more than 3,000 Bhutanese artworks. Paro Rinpung Dzong houses the district Monastic Body as well as government administrative offices. With its intricate wood work, large beams slotted into each other and held together without nails, it is regarded as one of the finest examples of Bhutanese architecture.

After the day's activities, we then go to town for dinner, shopping and possible evening photography.



Day 10

Feb 25

Paro

BLD

We set out for another adventurous day where we hike to Tiger's Nest Monastery (Taktsang Palphug Monastery); a 3 hour hike each way. Tiger's Nest is the most iconic site in Bhutan, and for good reason. Clinging to the side of a cliff, the monastery is 2,600 feet (800m) above the valley floor and at an elevation of 10,232 feet (3118m). It was first built in 1692 around the cave where Guru Padmasambhava (credited with introducing Buddhism to Bhutan) is said to have meditated for three years, three months, three weeks, three days and three hours in the 8th century. No trip to Bhutan would be complete without a visit to this remarkable heritage site.

A coffee house at the half way point offers food, drinks, and a fabulous view of the monastery. Take a break before you continue your journey to the top or stop here and enjoy a lighter day. But, making it to the top is well worth your effort.

We'll end the day back at the hotel for our farewell dinner and a final photo review extravaganza.



Day 11

Feb 26

Paro - Bangkok

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After breakfast it is time to depart our Bhutan accommodation and make our way to the airport.

Flight from Bhutan to Bangkok on Druk Air KB where our tour unfortunately comes to an end.



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## PRICE & INCLUSIONS

Tour price, \$8,700 USD per person (double/twin), is based on a group of 8-12. Single occupancy available at \$9,450 USD.

NOTES: Tour specifics, such as sequence of itinerary or daily events are approximate and subject to change, at any point in time as local schedules change or the local guide or instructor and/or escort deem(s) necessary. There can be additional costs increases and tour price variances caused by devaluation of local or USD\$ values/exchanges. Further, prices are subject to Bhutan price increases, and not guaranteed until final payment is received, from entire group.

### INCLUDED

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All hotels, meals as indicated on itinerary in bold (B-L-D). Bottled water will be provided, please bring your own canister for re-fills. Please advise any dietary restrictions, including diabetic or vegan; we will do our best to provide options to meal plans where possible, but cannot always guarantee this.

TIPS: John Greengo Photography Tours LLC ("JGP Tours") covers tips for guides & drivers; for meals included in the program. When meals & drinks are on your own, tipping is not included.

In country transportation and flights between Bangkok and Paro are included.

### NOT INCLUDED

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- Transportation to & from Bangkok (the tour start/end location)
- Passport & visa costs (other than your Bhutan visa): We will assist you in getting your visa for Bhutan. Last Frontiers Trekking (our local logistics coordinator) will coordinate the visa application process. More info, including deadlines participants are required to adhere to, will be provided to registered participants in the lead up to the tour.
- Extension/optional tours, laundry, hotel incidentals such as movies, room service, all beverages (other than water) including alcoholic beverages or mini-bar, phone, fax, internet fees and excess baggage charges. Any items not specifically listed.
- Insurance: It is highly recommend that you purchase travel/tour cancellation insurance or extra costs due to unanticipated changes in your itinerary for reasons beyond our control.
- Snacks outside of meal times.
- Any items specifically not listed in the itinerary.

### HEALTH CONCERNS

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This is a highly active tour requiring strength and stamina. We will be at an average elevation of 8000ft (2500m) for the duration of the tour; the highest elevation being around 11,000ft (3400m). Participants are expected to be able to walk, stand, stroll, and climb/descend stairs and hike over a variety of uneven surfaces for up to 7 hours or more at a time.



You must advise us of any physical limitations or concerns or any special electronic medical equipment you are bringing. JGP Tours reserves the right to decline to accept or retain any person as a tour participant should such person's behavior, health, or mental condition impede the operation of the trip.

Medical Considerations: If you have any medical or psychological conditions, it's very important that you let us know well before departure so that we can work with you as much as possible. Tour leaders have the right to disqualify anyone at any time during the trip if they feel the trip member is incapable of continuing and/or if a trip member's continued participation jeopardizes the group's or the individual's own safety. Under these circumstances, refunds are not given. Certain medical devices may result in the necessity of a single room or special electrical supplements and services.

## DEPOSITS & PAYMENTS

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A \$1000.00 deposit reserves your spot. Following the deposit payment, you will be emailed a Registration Form. Please return the completed Registration Form ASAP to secure your reservation. Deposits are accepted via the John Greengo Photography [shop page](#), where we accept a range of credit cards and other payment types (eg: ShopPay, PayPal, etc.).

Final payment is due 120 days before the tour commencement – October 19th, 2023.

Final payments are to be made to "John Greengo Photography Tours LLC" either by check or bank transfer. Further details will be provided to participants closer to the due date.

## CANCELLATION POLICY

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Cancellations must be made in writing.

Cancellations made:

- before October 19th, 2023 will receive a full refund minus a \$60 administration fee
- between October 19th, 2023 and December 18th, 2023 will receive a 50% refund
- after December 18th, 2023 will forfeit the entire cost of the trip

There is no refund for any unused portions of the tour program once tour has commenced.

In case that cancellations reduces the group size to below the minimum on which costs are based (currently 8 paying PAX), we reserve the right to either (a) offer the program with certain cost-reducing alternatives in accommodations, itinerary and/or services, (b) charge a supplement based on the actual costs for the final number of participants, (c) cancel the trip.

## PASSPORT & VISA

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A valid passport is required for all travelers and must be valid 6 months after return to your home country.

All travelers are responsible for checking with the appropriate embassies or consulates to determine if any visas are needed (except visa for Bhutan). Where visas are required, we strongly recommend they be obtained before departure. Securing visas is the responsibility of each traveler. It is of utmost importance that all travelers thoroughly check visa requirements before their intended date of travel. JGP Tours and/or Last Frontiers Trekking cannot be held responsible by travelers who do not meet visa requirements.

## INSURANCE

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It is highly recommended that you purchase insurance upon making a deposit for the tour – covering medical, trip cancellation and interruption, and loss of baggage.



## TRAVEL ADVISORY & WARNINGS

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It is the responsibility of the traveler to become informed on the most current travel advisories and warnings of your country's government (for USA citizens: US State Department's travel website at [www.travel.state.gov/](http://www.travel.state.gov/) or call at 1(888) 407.4747). In the event of an active State Department Travel Warning against travel to the specific destination of the trip, should you still choose to travel, notwithstanding any travel advisory or warning, you assume all risk of personal injury, death or property damage that may arise out of the events like those advised or warned against.

## RESPONSIBILITY

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JGP Tours cannot be held responsible for any additional costs incurred by the passenger due to missed, canceled or delayed flights. These costs will be borne by the tour participant. By the acceptance of vouchers, contracts, or tickets, the tour participant agrees to the foregoing and also agrees that neither JGP Tours nor its affiliates shall not be or become liable or responsible for any loss, injury or damage of person, property or otherwise in connection with and accommodations, transportation, or other services, resulting directly or indirectly from acts of God, dangers incident to the bush, the sea, by fire, machinery, actual or intended wars, whether declared or not, hostilities, civil disturbances, strikes, riots, thefts, sickness, quarantines, medical or custom regulations, defaults, delays or cancellation or of changes in itinerary, from causes beyond the control of JGP Tours.

Anyone not utilizing the pre-arranged transportation or accommodation is responsible for the cost of any substitute transportation or accommodation. No change in the itineraries is expected, however JGP Tours reserves the right to make changes if necessary. JGP Tours cannot be responsible for changes of itinerary.

The payment of the deposit or any other partial or full payment for a tour reservation constitutes agreement and consent to all provisions of the conditions and general information contained in the website or customized itineraries.

## DISCLOSURE NOTICE

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Please be aware that during your participation in a JGP Tours tour, certain risks and dangers may arise, including, but not limited to, the hazards of traveling in undeveloped areas, travel by boat, train, automobile, aircraft or other means of conveyance, the forces of nature, political unrest and accident or illness in remote regions without means of rapid evacuation or medical facilities. Also be aware and clearly understand that JGP Tours and our affiliates will not have liability regarding provisions of medical care or the adequacy of any care that may be rendered.

**YOU ARE VOLUNTARILY PARTICIPATING IN THESE ACTIVITIES WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE DANGERS INVOLVED AND HEREBY AGREE TO ACCEPT ANY RISKS.**

**AS LAWFUL CONSIDERATION** for the agreement with JGP Tours to participate in such trips and activities you hereby agree that you will not make a claim against JGP Tours or sue for bodily injury, emotional trauma, death and/or property damage, however caused, as a result of your participation in the tour. You therefore release JGP Tours and its employees from all claims, actions, and demands that you may have for bodily injury, death, or property damage arising from your participation in a tour. This release of Liability and Assumption of Risk agreement is entered into on behalf of all members of your family including minors accompanying you. This agreement is binding on your heirs, legal representatives and assigns. If any portion of this agreement is unenforceable, the remaining portions shall remain in full force and effect.

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