



Tagtshang Monastery



Gangtey Nature Trail

## BHUTAN & THAILAND

April 6, 2022 – 22 Days

*A Himalayan mountain adventure*

Bhutan is a country like no other. It is one of the safest places on earth to visit. It is the 8<sup>th</sup> happiest nation on the globe and it has also given the unique concept of GNH (Gross National Happiness) to the world. Bhutan is now amongst one of the highest per capita nations in the world – not in terms of monetary standing, but in the sense of individual 'happiness quotient'. Bhutan has a rich and unique cultural heritage that has largely remained intact due to its isolation from the rest of the world until the 1960s. One of the main attractions for tourists is the country's culture and traditions being deeply rooted in its Buddhist heritage. This is Wells Gray Tours' 3<sup>rd</sup> trip to Bhutan. You will be expertly guided and will experience this remarkable country as the Bhutanese people know it.

Activity Level: 3



TOUR  
25

56 Meals Included:

18 breakfasts, 19 lunches, 19 dinners

Fares per person:

\$12,295 double/twin; \$13,515 single  
Please add 0.2% GST.

Early Bookers:

\$250 discount on first 6 seats; \$125 on next 2

Experience Points:

Earn 222 points on this tour.

Redeem 222 points if you book by January 5, 2022.

Departure from: BC Interior



Punakha Dzong

## ITINERARY

### Day 1: Wednesday, April 6

Departures are from Kamloops, Salmon Arm and the Okanagan Valley, and we travel by coach to Vancouver Airport. Meet your fellow travellers during a get-acquainted dinner at Globe @ YVR in the Fairmont Hotel. Our flight to Asia leaves late tonight.

**Meals included:** Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Overnight flight

### Day 2: Thursday, April 7

We cross the **International Date Line** and lose one day, gaining it back on April 26.

### Day 3: Friday, April 8

We change planes in Hong Kong and continue to **Bangkok**, arriving mid-morning. We meet our Thai guide and driver, and have lunch en route to the hotel for an early check-in and rest. Bangkok is the capital and largest city of Thailand with a population of about 10 million. This evening, we explore bustling Chinatown, an area packed with market stalls, street-side restaurants, and gold shops. We travel by tram past the "must-see" attractions – Golden Mount, Democracy Monument, Wat Ratchanaddaram, Wat Suthat, Giant Swing, flower market at Pakklong Talaad, Wat Pho, City Pillar Shrine, and Grand Palace.

**Meals included:** Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Chatrium Riverside Hotel

### Day 4: Saturday, April 9

Today's tour goes to the gleaming **Grand Palace**, one of the most beautiful examples of a traditional Siamese Court and previously the residence of royalty. Later, we visit three of Bangkok's famous Buddhist temples – **Wat Trimitr, Wat Pho, and Wat Arun**. Bangkok is sometimes called 'Venice of the East' and its klongs or canals provide convenient access to the western side of the Chao Phraya River. We glide through the klongs in traditional **long-tail wooden boats**.

There is a stop at the unique National Museum of Royal Barges, home



Bangkok klong tour

to elaborate royal vessels used in state processions.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Chatrium Riverside Hotel

### Day 5: Sunday, April 10

Thailand's floating markets hold cultural significance in the country. A visit to **Damnoen Saduak** is like travelling back to the ancient Siam Kingdom where colourfully-clad merchants paddle along the narrow canals. We witness the traditional ways of trading fruit, vegetables and other items from small boats. We learn how boats are a vital mode of transport for locals in their everyday lives. This tour includes a visit to the famed Maeklong Railway where stalls are erected track-side and hastily moved as trains arrive.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Chatrium Riverside Hotel

### Day 6: Monday, April 11

We fly from Bangkok to Paro, Bhutan, the country's only international airport and we meet our guide, drivers, and CEO of Bhutan Mindful Travels. **Welcome to Bhutan!** Paro has a population of just 20,000 people, quite a contrast to bustling Bangkok. We visit the **National Museum** which has cultural and natural exhibits, and an impressive view of the Paro Valley.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Hotel Tashi Namgyal

### Day 7: Tuesday, April 12

Bhutan is one of the most idyllic natural destinations in the world with 72% under forest cover. It has healthy animal populations, including many species which are threatened elsewhere. Our day starts at 5 am with a drive to **Chelela Pass** for bird watching, including Himalayan monal pheasants, kalej pheasants, and blood pheasants. Chelela Pass is 3,900 metres elevation, one of the highest road points in Bhutan. If the weather is fine, Jomolhari Mountain which is 7,300 metres high should be visible. Normally, April provides favourable weather and excellent photographic opportunities to capture the Himalayas. Then we drive part way down into the **Haa Valley** which opened to tourists just eight years ago. Back in Paro, we visit **Kichu Lhakhang**, a 7<sup>th</sup> century

temple built by the Tibetan King, Thrisong Detsen. This temple is older than the Mahayana Buddhism, introduced in the 8<sup>th</sup> century.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Hotel Tashi Namgyal

### Day 8: Wednesday, April 13

We hike to the 16<sup>th</sup> century **Tagtshang Monastery**, also called the Tiger's Nest. Guru Rinpoche who introduced Tantric Buddhism to Bhutan meditated in the cave eight centuries earlier. This is one of the country's most sacred sites and best known attractions, and visiting the temple is said to enhance your spiritual happiness. The hike is 7 km round trip and about 450 metres ascent. Lunch is served at Tagtshang Cafeteria halfway to the monastery. If you do not feel you want to complete the climb, the views from the cafeteria are good and give a great sense of the unique location of this structure. A horse can be arranged this far for a small fee. Later, time permitting, there is an optional visit to Paro Market.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Hotel Tashi Namgyal

### Day 9: Thursday, April 14

Enjoy a day of **Paro Tsechu**, a Buddhist Festival which locals believe will remove their negative karmas for the entire year. A Tsechu is performed as a tribute to Guru Rinpoche, the great Buddhist master who brought Buddhism to Bhutan. He was believed to have healed King Sindhu Raja by performing eight forms of dances representing eight manifestations of Padmasambhava. The monks perform a series of meticulously choreographed religion inspired dances wearing grand silk robes and exquisitely crafted masks. It takes years learning and mastering the art of mask



dance and months of meticulous practicing and rehearsing for the grand event.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Hotel Tashi Namgyal

### Day 10: Friday, April 15

Leaving Paro, we visit the **Iron Chain Bridge** built in 1433 by Thangtong Gyalpo, a famous Tibetan bridge builder who constructed 108 iron bridges throughout the Himalayas. We stay for two nights in Bhutan's capital city, **Thimpu**. This afternoon, we visit Buddha Point at Kuenselphodrang, one of the world's biggest Buddhas (51.5 metres) which was completed in 2015. Inside is a seven-storey temple which houses 100,008 eight-inch tall Buddha statues and 25,000 12-inch statues. The site is surrounded by nearly 1,000 acres of blue pine forest.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Hotel Jomolhari

### Day 11: Saturday, April 16

We see the exterior of **Trashichodzong**, the capital building of Bhutan, and the small palace of the 5<sup>th</sup> King of Bhutan. Later, we visit the **Motihang Takin enclosure**. The Takin is Bhutan's national animal, a docile creature that appears to have the body of a cow and the head of a goat. Another stop is the **Institute of Zorig Chusum** which preserves the rich culture and tradition of Bhutan and trains students in traditional art forms such as carpentry, painting, paper making, blacksmithery, weaving, sculpting, and boot making. Next, you have a choice of the **Folk Heritage Museum** which gives a good perspective of traditional lives of Bhutan OR the **National Textile Museum** where traditional weaving techniques and designs are exhibited. There is free time to visit the crafts bazaar emporium.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Hotel Jomolhari

### Day 12: Sunday, April 17

Today's drive takes us to **Dochula** for one of the most picturesque views of the Himalayas bordering Tibet. We experience diverse village landscapes and amazing terraced rice fields. We visit Chemi Lhakhang, built in 1499, where childless couples come to receive a fertility blessing. Dzongs are a very distinctive form of architecture

and serve as a religious, administrative, and social service centre. We tour **Punakha Dzong** where pictorial murals depict the life history of Buddha. If time permits, a **Mochu River raft trip** is offered at extra cost.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Hotel Pema Karpo



### Day 13: Monday, April 18

We drive to **Gangtey Gonpa**, a Buddhist institute for higher studies. It is also the seat of present Gangtey Trulku, the body emancipation of Pedmalingpa. Then we hike for 1½ hours along the Gangtey Nature Trail, admiring the beautiful forest and wetland of the Phobjikha Valley and possibly seeing some of the 450 **black-necked cranes** that winter here and are a protected bird.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Hotels Dewachen or Gakiling



### Day 14: Tuesday, April 19

Today's scenic drive is through **Pelela Pass** with frequent stops at birding sites and viewpoints. We pass through **Jigme Singye Wangchuck Park** with its impressive virgin forest cover. We see the Mangdechhu Dam, completed in 2019, which is 101 metres high and generates power for Bhutan and India. Another viewpoint is **Trongsa Dzong** where traders between Eastern and Western Bhutan had to pass through the middle of the

dzong using the only suspension bridge. Our overnight stay is in **Trongsa**.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Yangkhil Resort

### Day 15: Wednesday, April 20

We drive through the Yotongla Pass (3,425 m) and the splendid Chumey and Chamkhar valleys to reach **Bumthang** where we stay four nights. This afternoon, we meet the students at Zangdorbi Primary School.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Kaila Guest House



### Day 16: Thursday, April 21

Today we explore the Tang Valley. **Mebartso, or the Burning Lake**, is one of the most sacred pilgrimage sites in Bhutan. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Pema Lingpa jumped into the lake with a lighted lamp and emerged a few minutes later with the lamp still burning and holding a statue and a treasure chest containing Tantric Buddhist sacred texts. This afternoon, we tour **Ugyen Chholing Palace**, built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century by descendants of Pema Lingpa and now a museum of family artifacts.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Kaila Guest House

### Day 17: Friday, April 22

We leave early to get the best sightings of high altitude birds like tragopan, blood pheasants, and monals along the road side in the beautiful Ura Valley. We also visit **Phrumshingla National Park** which protects fir and temperate forests and a healthy population of tigers, red panda, and tragopans.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Kaila Guest House

### Day 18: Saturday, April 23

We visit **Jampel Lhakhang**, believed to be one of the oldest temples built in 659 by the Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo. He constructed 108 temples in the Himalayas to bring good luck for him and his wife. Afterwards, we walk to Tamshing Lhakhang (“good message”), a temple built by the Buddhist Saint Pema Lingpa. It contains some of the oldest wall paintings in Bhutan. The afternoon is leisure time.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Kaila Guest House

### Day 19: Sunday, April 24

We take a short flight from nearby Jakar back to **Paro**. A farewell dinner is planned with your Bhutanese guides and drivers, along with a campfire and cultural program by a local dance group.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Hotel Tashi Namgay or Khangkhu Resort

### Day 20: Monday, April 25

Bidding farewell to Bhutan, we fly from Paro to Bangkok.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Dinner

**Accommodation:** Aetas Lumpini Hotel

### Day 21: Tuesday, April 26

We visit the picturesque **Jim Thompson House**, a traditional Thai style house with an extensive collection of Southeast Asian art and antique objects. Thompson founded the renowned Thai Silk Company, but mysteriously disappeared in the Malaysian Highlands in 1967. Lunch is included at the house, then we drive to Bangkok Airport. Our flight via Hong Kong arrives in Vancouver this evening, since we gain a day with the crossing of the Date Line.

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch

**Accommodation:** Fairmont YVR Hotel

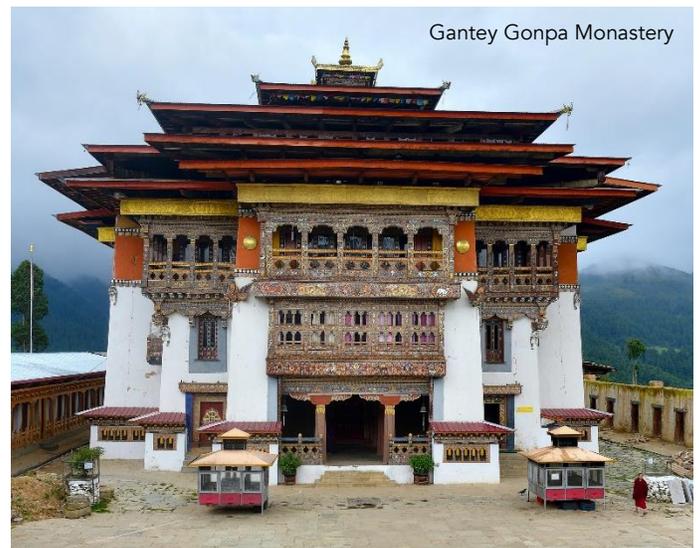
### Day 22: Wednesday, April 27

Morning flights are arranged to Kelowna, Kamloops, and Penticton airports.

## WONDERS OF BHUTAN

Get ready for a fairytale adventure as we explore the remarkable country of Bhutan for 14 days. Bhutan is a small remote country located between China-ruled Tibet in the north and India to the south. Lonely Planet ranked Bhutan as the world’s top destination of 2013 and CNN did the same in 2017. Bhutan is very protective of its natural and cultural richness. It is only in this century that Bhutan is cautiously opening up to the world, but tourism is very restricted and well-monitored. Individual travel is not permitted here — you must book through a local tour company and be with a guide for your entire visit. Bhutan has given the world the unique concept of GNH (Gross National Happiness), rating the country’s success not in terms of monetary standing but by the sense of individual happiness quotient. The country is very deeply rooted in Buddhism, and most Buddhist practices and beliefs have stayed unchanged for centuries. Maroon-robed monks and nuns of all ages are a common sight in Bhutan. You will find a well-structured peaceful society where the people are warm and hospitable.

The tour also includes 4 nights in Bangkok, capital of Thailand, with visits to the Grand Palace, Jim Thompson House, and several temples, plus a klong boat tour.



Gantey Gonpa Monastery

## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Coach transportation to Vancouver Airport
- Flight from Vancouver to Bangkok, Thailand
- Current air taxes, fees and fuel surcharges
- Airline luggage fees for 1 suitcase per person
- 19 nights of accommodation and hotel taxes
- Thai guide for 3 days
- Tram tour of Bangkok highlights
- Wat Trimitr, Wat Pho, and Wat Arun temples
- Grand Palace
- Boat tour of Bangkok klongs
- National Museum of Royal Barges
- Damnoen Saduak floating market
- Transfer from hotel to Bangkok Airport
- Flight from Bangkok to Paro, Bhutan
- Mini-coach transportation throughout Bhutan
- Bhutan guide for 14 days
- Visa fee for Bhutan
- National Museum of Bhutan
- Bird watching in Chelela Pass
- Kichu Lhakhang Temple
- Tagtshang Monastery or Tiger's Nest
- Paro Tsechu Buddhist Festival
- Buddha Point
- Trashichodzong capital building
- Takin National Animal Enclosure
- Zorig Chusum National Institute
- Folk Heritage Museum OR National Textile Museum
- Chemi Lhakhang
- Punakha Dzong
- Gangtey Gonpa Buddhist Institute
- Gangtey Nature Trail
- Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park
- Visit with students at Zangdorbi Primary School
- Jampel Lhakhang
- Tamshing Lhakhang
- Ura Valley birdwatching
- Phrumshingla National Park
- Mebartso Burning Lake
- Ugyen Chholing Palace
- Flight from Jakar to Paro
- Farewell dinner with cultural program & dance
- Flight from Paro to Bangkok
- Transfer from Bangkok Airport to hotel
- Jim Thompson House and gallery tour
- Flight from Bangkok to Vancouver
- Flight to Kamloops, Kelowna or Penticton
- Knowledgeable Wells Gray tour director
- Luggage handling at hotels
- Gratuities to local guides and drivers
- **56 meals:** 18 breakfasts, 19 lunches, 19 dinners

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## TOUR NOTES

- In Bhutan, many of the attractions, dzongs, temples, and palaces that we visit are accessible only by walking. Although you may opt out of the longer hikes, your experience of the destination is very often on foot, so you should be comfortable with walking at least 5 km with elevation change.
- Most of Bhutan is at high elevations, starting in Paro at 2,100 metres. Some places we visit are 3,000 to 4,000 metres altitude. Many people are affected by such high altitudes. Acclimatization is important for the first couple of days, so your body can adjust.
- Please ensure that you visit a travel health clinic at least 3 months prior to departure to find out if there are any inoculations recommended for the areas we are travelling. Most health units hold travel immunization consultations. There are usually charges associated with this service.
- Because of the closed nature of tourist activity in Bhutan, travel is higher priced than many other areas of the world. The Bhutan government takes 35% of the fee charged by the local tour operator.
- A passport is required and must be valid for 6 months after the tour returns. Our Bhutan tour operator will assist with your visa for Bhutan about a month prior and the fee is included in your tour fare. A Visa is not currently required for Thailand.
- The tour will be accompanied from British Columbia by a Wells Gray tour director. Thoroughly experienced multilingual guides travel with us throughout the tour in Bhutan and Thailand. Local guides conduct sightseeing tours in several places. You will be expertly guided and well looked after!

**TOUR 25** This is a Tour 25 departure, meaning the tour has limited participants, a more intimate travel experience. This tour is limited to 17 people. Early booking is recommended!



**Activity Level 3:** High and sometimes rigorous activity including significant distances to hike and frequent steps. Bhutan is a country where many of the attractions are accessed by foot. Therefore, you should be able to walk at least 5 km with elevation changes of up to 500 metres.

Tagtshang Monastery is a 7 km hike return, but a horse can be rented for part of the way. Some places are at an altitude of 3,000 metres or more. Seeing everything mentioned in this itinerary requires participation at Activity Level 3. See Tour Notes for additional information. This tour is not appropriate for people with canes or walkers. There are many stops during this tour and you must be able to get on and off the mini-bus by yourself without delaying your fellow travellers. Be prepared for longer walks in the major airports. Prior to Wells Gray accepting your booking, you will be required to sign a declaration that you are capable of travelling on an Activity Level 3 tour. The tour director and driver have many responsibilities, so please do not expect them, or your fellow travellers, to provide ongoing assistance. If you are not capable of keeping up with the group or require frequent assistance, the tour director may stop you from participating in some activities or some tour days. In extreme situations, you may be required to leave the tour and travel home at your own expense; travel insurance will probably not cover you.

## TOUR POLICIES

**Payments:** A deposit of \$1,200 per person is requested at the time of booking and balance is due January 5, 2022. By paying the deposit, you agree to the Terms & Conditions, Activity Level and Cancellation Policy outlined.

**Discounts:** Early bookers receive \$250 discount on first 6 seats and \$125 on next 2 seats for booking early with deposit. The discount is not offered after January 5, 2022.

**Cancellation Policy:** Up to December 3, 2021, the cancellation charge is \$100 per person. From December 4, 2021 to January 5, 2022, the cancellation charge is \$500 per person. From January 6 to February 4, the cancellation charge is 50% of the tour fare. After February 4, there is no refund.

**Changes:** Changes to taxes and surcharges from tour suppliers can occur at any time and are beyond the control of Wells Gray Tours, therefore, Wells Gray Tours reserves the right to increase fares due to such changes until departure. The flight schedules and air fares between Vancouver and Paro are subject to change, as airlines are still making adjustments post-Covid. Air taxes and fuel surcharges could also change, in which case the tour fare will be adjusted. Our best estimates have been used in planning this tour.

**Travel Insurance:** A Comprehensive Insurance policy is available through Wells Gray Tours and coverage is provided by Travel Guard. Policies purchased at deposit include a waiver of the pre-existing condition clause, otherwise policies can be purchased no later than at final payment. Please contact us for details.

**Photo Credits:** Adobe Stock (Tagtshang, Punakha Dzong, Paro Tsechu Festival), Marion Wienhold (Gangtey Nature Trail, Dochula Pass, students singing), Wikimedia (klong boat, Black-necked cranes, Gantey Gonpa)

**Experience Points:** This tour earns 222 e-points. Each time you travel on a Wells Gray tour, you earn Experience Points, or e-points. One e-point equals \$1. Redeem your points on select tours or accumulate enough points to earn a free tour! Redemptions offered until January 5, 2022.

**Consumer Protection BC Licences:** Kamloops 178, Vernon 655, Kelowna 588, Penticton 924, Victoria 65842

### KAMLOOPS

(Head Office)  
250 Lansdowne St.  
Kamloops, BC V2C 1X7  
250-374-0831

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Kelowna, BC V1Y 2R1  
250-762-3435

### VERNON

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Vernon, BC V1T 6B7  
250-545-9197

### PENTICTON

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Penticton, BC V2A 8B6  
250-493-1255

### VICTORIA

102-736 Broughton St.  
Victoria, BC V8W 1E1  
250-590-7889

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1-800-667-9552



## BHUTAN & THAILAND — April 6, 2022

This tour is rated “Activity Level 3” by the tour planners at Wells Gray Tours. This rating is the highest activity level assigned to a tour, meaning that there is a lot of activity which could include one or more of (but is not limited to) the following:

- You can hike 3 km in 1 hour and up to 8 km with an elevation gain during a single hike.
- You can handle activity at high altitudes such as over 10,000 feet or 3,000 metres.
- You can walk on cobblestones, rocky trails, and uneven sidewalks.
- You can handle winding or rough roads without motion sickness occurring (or have medication).
- You can climb one or two flights of stairs to a hotel room if there is no elevator.
- You can carry your own luggage in airports and at some hotels.

Since a few people who are not capable of doing the above activities can hold up the entire group, Wells Gray Tours expects everybody booking a tour with “Activity Level 3” to be reasonably fit. You must be able to participate in activities without the assistance of the tour director, driver or other travellers. Please read the following and sign acknowledging that these statements are true. The tour deposit will be due after you have signed this statement.

I want to travel on a Wells Gray tour with a rating of “Activity Level 3”.

I have read the brochure with the full itinerary and description of the activities that are typical on this tour.

I understand that this is the highest activity level that a Wells Gray tour can be rated.

I am confident that I can participate in tour activities at this level and I will not hold up or delay the other members of the tour.

I do not require the use of a wheelchair or a walker.

If my physical condition changes between booking and departure date such that I can no longer do this level of activity, I will notify the Wells Gray office or agent. The specified penalties will apply for cancelling and travel insurance may cover this.

If I am not capable of keeping up with the group or I require ongoing assistance, I understand that the Wells Gray tour director has the right to not allow me to participate in some activities or some days of the tour. In extreme situations, I acknowledge that I may be required to leave the tour and travel home at my own expense, and that travel insurance will probably not cover me.

This statement has been implemented by Wells Gray Tours to maintain high quality itineraries, accurate timing, and the enjoyment of all tour participants. Each person booking this tour must sign this statement. Thank you for your understanding.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_