

## **7 Day Yoga Retreat & Cultural Tour**

(SAMPLE ITINERARY)

### **Day 1**

Your introduction to our enchanting kingdom begins with a flight over the Himalayas into Paro Valley; truly one of the world's most spectacular sights. You will view the world's highest, most majestic peaks and enjoy the view of the approaching valley with its primeval alpine forests, monasteries, temples and farmhouses nestled in splendid mountain isolation. After clearing customs and immigration your Bhutanese escort will drive you through the lush green valley of Paro to your hotel, The Zhiwa Ling. After freshening up, we will meet for lunch and spend a few hours in town exploring the shops and galleries. Our first afternoon yoga gathering and meditation exploration will invoke somatic prana (life force) within creative free form movement. We will invite the elements of spontaneity and mystery into our journey through a transformative agni (fire) vinyasa flow. Our new yoga tribe will become grounded and centered in our new environment as we shift our focus to our connection to earth energy. We will gather earth elements in a ritual to create a "sacred space" altar that will be a reflection of the journey's most enriching treasures. We conclude our first day together with tea and reflection on our journey that brought us to The Last Shangri-La.

Enjoy dinner and the evening at leisure. We will gladly book spa treatments for those interested.

### **Day 2**

Today begins with the complete Solar Eclipse. We are thrilled to have an exclusive opportunity to be at one of the few places in the world where this solar eclipse will be fully visible as we experience this eclipse in its entirety. A solar eclipse takes place when the moon passes between the earth and the sun. Strong with masculine energy, the sun is the fire aspect in the sky. A solar eclipse signals great change and transition. As the most powerful time of a solar eclipse is at dawn, we will gather at sunrise for a practice designed to generate great heat and fluidity. Come prepared with thoughts of changes you may be going through or considering in your life. Energetically, this will be a perfect opportunity to align with the force and strength of our planetary universe. A picnic breakfast will be provided. After this remarkable experience, we will adjourn to The Tea House (or somewhere similar on the grounds).

Throughout the rest of the day we will move in a slower outward pace, allowing our bodies and hearts to absorb the richness and wonder within the landscape of Bhutan. We will connect to the healing nature that surrounds us by tuning into the more subtle energetic that exists in the plants, animals, rocks, rivers, and limitless beauty everywhere. By moving simply and mindfully through a walking meditation and then into timeless stillness we discover and open to the divine healing power of being immersed in such remarkably pristine nature. We encourage you to spend this day in the natural flow of all that unfolds. Honor your intuition and inspiration by following your own muse; journal, collect items for your sacred journey altar, rest, reflect, absorb the love and happiness that surrounds you.

Enjoy dinner and the evening at leisure. We will gladly book spa treatments for those interested.

### **Day 3**

We continue our rhythm of sunrise gathering and drawing on the energetic qualities of our yoga practice to empower and center ourselves. Pranayama breath work and meditation will prepare us by purifying and awakening our spirit to the creative endeavors arranged for the day ahead.

After breakfast we travel to Thimphu, the capital city. Where we visit:

- The National Memorial Chorten built in honor of the late Majesty, King Jigme Dorji Wangchuk. The painting and images inside the monument provide a rare insight into Buddhist philosophy.
- Dupthop Lhakhang, one of the few surviving nunneries in Bhutan.
- The National Library, stocked with Ancient Buddhist manuscripts.
- The Art and Craft School where traditional art is still kept alive through instruction in the art of painting Thankas, sacred Buddhist religious scrolls.
- The Folk Heritage Museum, which is dedicated to connecting people to the Bhutanese rural past through the exhibition of items and artifacts used in rural households.
- The handmade Paper Factory, where papers are made from the fiber of Daphne and Edgeworthia.
- Tashichho Dzong, seat of the national government and the central Monastic Body, including the summer residence of the Je Khenpo, chief Abbot of Bhutan. The Tashichho Dzong is open to visitors in the winter when the Je Khenpo and the Monk Body move to Punakha, the ancient winter capital of Bhutan.
- The Medicine Hospital and the Handicraft Emporium, which has all types of crafts for sale.

Lunch and dinner will be provided en route. Upon returning to the hotel in Paro, relax and reflect on the day's events with a gentle pranayama breathing and "tratak" candlelight meditation session intended to help calm the central nervous systems of a busy traveler's mind, while encouraging a restful night's sleep.

### **Day 4**

We invite you to wake on this day at sunrise to prepare body, mind and spirit for adventure. Awaken shakti (sacred force) with an invigorating vinyasa flow practice followed by a natural meditation session designed to open your creative awareness and potential. Follow your practice with a soothing cup of tea and nourish your body with a healthy breakfast to prepare for a day full of adventure in the journey that lies ahead.

Our adventure begins with a visit to the Drukgyal Dzong, a fort built in 1647 by the great Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, father and unifier of medieval Bhutan, it once protected against Tibetan invasions. The Dzong was destroyed by accidental fire in the 1950s and is now left in ruins as an evocative reminder of the great victories it was built to commemorate. Explore the ramparts and on a clear day experience an unforgettable view of Mt. Jhomulhari (7314m). Next, enjoy a visit to Kyichu Lhakhang, one of the 108 temples built in the 7<sup>th</sup> century by first Tibetan King, Songtsen Gampo. Weather permitting; enjoy an outdoor yoga session with tea and reflection, followed by a late lunch. In the afternoon visit Ta Dzong, built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century as a watch tower for the Paro Dzong. Ta Dzong was converted into the National Museum in 1968, and it boasts antique thankas, textiles, weapons and armor, household objects and a rich assortment of natural and historic artifacts; it is considered to be one of the best natural history museums in Asia. Below the museum is the Rimping Dzong, a 350-year-old fort, center of civil and religious authority in the valley, housing the governance for Paro as well as 200 monks. A short walk takes you to the base of the Dzong and across a traditional cantilevered, covered bridge. A short

distance further is one of the innumerable archery grounds where we will hope to take in an archery match, the national sport of Bhutan.

At the hotel, enjoy dinner at leisure and rest in our most beautiful accommodations or join our yoga tribe to enjoy a cool and gentle rejuvenating flow to open our hearts to further embrace the tapestry of our new yoga tribe and environment.

### **Day 5**

This day begins with a restorative heart centered / heart opening yoga practice and meditation followed by tea and time for sharing of group inspiration. After breakfast we embark on a day excursion and hike to Chele La Pass and then continue on to the Kila Nunnery, the oldest of the remaining twelve nunneries in Bhutan. Lunch will be provided en route.

The early evening will include a yoga nidra meditation to settle our bodies and minds followed by tea and reflection, with dinner and the remainder of the evening at leisure.

### **Day 6**

After breakfast we will drive up north of the valley to Satsam Chorten for a one hour hike to the viewpoint of the Takshang Monastery, Tiger's Nest. Weather permitting a spot along the water will provide the perfect natural setting for an invigorating pranayama yoga practice to call up vital energy in the body. We will work to control the rhythm of our pranic energy thereby preparing our body and mind for the trek ahead. The trail climbs through beautiful rhododendron and pine forest, many of the trees festooned with Spanish moss, and an occasional grove of fluttering prayer flags. Recess for a light refreshment at the tea house and then walk a short distance until you see clearly and seemingly within reach, the Takshang Monastery. Built in the 1600s, this incredible monastery clings to the edge of a sheer rock cliff that plunges 900m into the valley below. Legend has it that Guru Padmasambhava, the tantric mystic who brought Buddhism to Bhutan, landed here on the back of a flying tigress. Lunch will be served at the tea house, followed by a walk back to the road, and then a drive to the hotel. To soothe tired muscles after the hike, we offer our yogis a traditional hot stone bath with Ara.

Dinner and the rest of your day at your leisure; we will gladly book spa treatments for anyone that requires.

### **Day 7**

Our final day together will begin with a ritual gathering to honor our shared experience and the creative transformations that have taken place within. To preserve the connection to the divine within each of us as individuals and our collective yoga tribe, we will seal our sacred time together with powerful mantra and mudra expressions. After breakfast, depart for the Paro Airport where your escort will bid you farewell.