



ALUMNAE ASSOCIATION of SMITH COLLEGE

Bhutan: Inside the Dragon Kingdom

April 28 – May 12, 2007

DETAILED PRELIMINARY ITINERARY

Day 1, Sat. April 28, 2007

Meals Provided: (Aloft)

DEPART USA

Your Bhutan odyssey begins with an evening departure from New York JFK aboard Cathay Pacific. The easy-going, highly efficient, and friendly style is apparent as soon as you board the aircraft. Cathay is known for its excellent food and in flight service, so sit back and enjoy the hospitality, dinner, a movie and a chance to catch up on some sleep on this flight to Hong Kong (connecting to Bangkok).

Fly New York JFK to Hong Kong on CX #889 (21:20 - 07:05)(+2)

NOTE: Suggested Flight Only.

Day 2, Sun. Apr. 29, 2007

Meals Provided: (Aloft)

FLIGHT EN ROUTE

Lose a day as you cross the International Date Line.

Day 3, Mon. Apr. 30, 2007

Meals Provided: (Aloft) D

ARRIVE BANGKOK, THAILAND

Arrive Hong Kong at 7:05 AM and connect to your Bangkok flight.

Fly Hong Kong to Bangkok on CX #713 (09:05 - 10:50).

NOTE: Suggested Flight Only.

Arrive Bangkok at 10:50 AM. Welcome to Thailand. Upon arrival, clear Immigration, then proceed to the next level down and collect your luggage. After passing through Customs, meet our tour leader and local guide.

Transfer, via the pedestrian bridge, to the airport hotel for time to relax before an evening orientation meeting, followed by a light dinner. Then, early to bed for a well deserved sleep.

Overnight Amari Airport Hotel. This four-star hotel is uniquely connected by air-conditioned walkway to Bangkok's international airport; making it just minutes away from tomorrow morning's check in counter. Its accommodations, wide range of restaurants and a pool make it a popular choice with leisure travelers in transit.

Day 4, Tue. May 1, 2007

Meals Provided: (Breakfast aloft) L D

THIMPHU, BHUTAN

Early morning transfer to the airport for the flight to Bhutan. Fly Bangkok to Paro on KB #121 (05:50 - 09:00) Economy Class.

Welcome to Bhutan! Upon arrival, clear Immigration and Customs, and meet our Bhutanese guide. We'll drive for about 90 minutes to Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan.

Thimphu has a population of 45,000, composed mainly of monks, the Kingdom's royal family, government and civil service, and a growing middle class. Thimphu's emergence as a capital city only began in 1952. Unlike many modern cities, Thimphu has kept a strong national character in its architecture.

Note: Today will be easy with little touring in order to allow participants to acclimatize to altitude.

After checking into our hotel and time for lunch, we'll tour the capital, including a visit to the School of Arts and Crafts, while in session. Government scholarships await the talented and motivated who attend this academy to learn traditional arts. Nearby, the National Library was built to preserve ancient sacred texts in both Dzongkha (Bhutanese) and Tibetan languages. There will also be a visit to the Folk Heritage Museum.

Return to our hotel for dinner and time to relax.

Overnight Hotel Druk (Executive Floor).

In the heart of Thimphu, the Druk Hotel offers 53 nicely appointed rooms and is one of the better hotels in town with its modern amenities. The restaurant offers a variety of cuisine from casual to fine dining. The hotel's other facilities include bar, business center, steam & sauna, laundry service and satellite television.

Day 5, Wed. May 2, 2007

Meals Provided: B L D

THIMPHU

This morning, drive to the valley viewpoint at Sangay Gang to continue our sightseeing tour of Thimphu. Here, we'll visit the Takin Sanctuary. The takin is

the national animal and looks like a cross between a gnu and a musk deer. It has an immense face, a tremendously thick neck and short thick legs support its heavy body. The takin continues to befuddle taxonomists, who cannot quite relate it to any other animal. The famous biologist George Schaller called it a 'bee stung moose', referring to its humped nose and similarity in size to the North American moose. Taxonomists have now put it into a class of its own, *Budorcas taxicolor*.

During the lunch hour, many Bhutanese men partake in a game of archery (datse), the national sport. These games are held daily at the south end of Changlingmethang Stadium, just behind our hotel.

After lunch, visit the excellent Textile Museum. Next, we'll visit the School of the Voluntary Artists of Thimphu and then visit a private art studio.

This afternoon, enjoy a cocktail reception before witnessing a private performance of mask and folk dances by the Royal Academy of Performing Arts.

To finish the day, visit the Tashichhodzong. This dzong is the capitol building and palace of the reigning king, Jigme Signye Wangchuck. Here, the king and the Je Khenpo (supreme religious leader) rule side-by-side to provide for the welfare of their people's secular and spiritual well being. They are both equally loved and venerated by the Bhutanese.

This dzong is not only the seat of the government but the summer residence of the Chief Abbot and Central Monastic Body when they migrate here from Punakha, their winter residence.

This evening, enjoy a traditional dinner at a nearby restaurant.

Overnight Hotel Druk.

Day 6, Thu. May 3, 2007

Meals Provided: B L D

PUNAKHA/WANGDUE

This morning, transfer (approx. three hours) to Punakha, the old capital of Bhutan, crossing Dochula Pass at an altitude of 10,300 ft. If the weather is clear, view the majestic Himalayan ranges at Dochula Pass.

Punakha consisted of nothing more than a dzong as recently as 20 years ago. The small size of the town is surprising, considering the role that Punakha has played in the history of Bhutan.

After lunch, visit the Punakha Dzong, the winter residence of the Chief Abbot and the Central Monastic Body. Renovations are currently being completed due to damage caused by a fire in 1986, allowing an insight into traditional building techniques which eschew the use of nails, plans or power tools.

Late afternoon, transfer to our hotel for dinner and time to relax.

Overnight Kichu Resort.

This is a wonderful, locally owned resort, situated beside a beautiful, raging river and regarded as one of the best hotels in the Wangdue/Punakha area.

Day 7, Fri. May 4, 2007

Meals Provided: B L D

TRONGSA/BUMTHANG (JAKAR)

This morning, drive to Bumthang, via Trongsa with a picnic lunch en route. Proceed across the Pele La Pass (11,300 ft.), which divides western Bhutan from the central and eastern part of the country.

This afternoon, visit Trongsa Dzong, the ancestral home of Bhutan's royal family. At one with an undulating ridge top, it is arguably the most stunning and impressive dzong in the kingdom! The landscape around Trongsa is spectacular and the Dzong can be seen for miles.

Upon arrival at our Bumthang hotel, relax and dine after our drive.

Overnight Gongkhar Lodge.

This is a small family run lodge with clean and cozy rooms and wonderful hospitality.

Day 8, Sat. May 5, 2007

Meals Provided: B L D

BUMTHANG (JAKAR)

After a leisurely morning at our lodge, explore the Jakar valley with a visit to the Kurjey Lhakhang complex and then walk about 20 minutes to the Tamshing monastery.

Next, visit the Jambay Lhakhang complex. One of the oldest temples, Jambay Lhakhang was built in the 7th Century by the Tibetan king, Songtsen Gonpo.

Finally, visit the Swiss Dairy project to sample some fine cheese and fresh wheat beer (optional). The remainder of the evening is at leisure to stroll through the local town.

The evening is at leisure to relax, write postcards and explore on your own.

Overnight Gongkhar Lodge.

Day 9, Sun. May 6, 2007

Meals Provided: B L D

URA/BUMTHANG (JAKAR)

Early this morning, depart on a 90 minute drive to the last of the Bumthang valleys, Ura. Our day will be spent in this picturesque agrarian village, set in a high valley (10,200 ft.). This is a model farming village, owing to the hard working

people here, even in such harsh climatic conditions. We will spend the day here and then return to Jakar late in the afternoon.

The evening is at leisure to relax, write postcards and explore on your own.

Overnight Gongkhar Lodge.

Day 10, Mon. May 7, 2007

Meals Provided: B L D

WANGDUE

After an early breakfast, return to the Wangdue area with a picnic lunch en route. The drive is about eight hours depending on the number of stops along the way.

Late afternoon we'll arrive at our comfortable resort for time to relax, dine and enjoy our surroundings.

Overnight Kichu Resort.

Day 11, Tue. May 8, 2007

Meals Provided: B L D

WANGDUE/THIMPHU/PARO

After a leisurely morning, drive back to Thimphu in time for lunch.

This afternoon, en route to Paro, visit Simtokha Dzong believed to be the oldest Dzong built by Shabdrung in 1627. It now houses the school of Language and Cultural Studies.

In Paro, houses built in traditional style and painted with colored designs line the main street which parallels the river. Near the grass area that forms the town square, the bustling main street is straight and windswept with the occasional caravan drivers leading their horses and idlers leaning against the store fronts.

We'll check into our hotel for time to relax before dinner.

Overnight Zhiwa Ling Resort.

This is a new hotel that just opened in September 2005. It is a beautiful hotel that focuses on traditional Bhutanese architecture while offering international standard facilities and luxury in a stunning environment.

Day 12, Wed. May 9, 2007

Meals Provided: B L D

PARO

After breakfast, tour the National Museum (Ta Dzong), housed in an ancient watch tower. The Ta Dzong towers above the Paro Dzong, and offers a well-interpreted collection of historic artifacts.

Next, visit the impressive Paro Dzong (fortress monastery) that dominates the valley. This is one of the finest examples of Bhutanese architecture, the blending of church and state; that is, of tantric Buddhism's role in the country's political organization and its architectural manifestation.

After lunch, take a pilgrimage to Kyichu Lhakhang, one of the most sacred temples in Bhutan. Bhutanese lore says that this temple was one of 108 temples built in a single day in 659 AD by Songtsen Gampo of Tibet for the specific purpose of pinning down an ogress who, covering all of Bhutan and Tibet, was impeding the spread of Buddhism in the area. Pilgrims come from all over the region to worship at this sacred site.

Later, we'll reconvene and visit the home of a local farming family to learn of their daily life, see their traditions and enjoy conversation, local snacks and tea.

Return to our hotel for dinner and time to relax.

Overnight Zhiwa Ling Resort.

Day 13, Thu. May 10, 2007

Meals Provided: B L D

PARO

This morning, start from Satsam Chorten and begin the trek to Taktsang (Tiger's Nest). Icon of Bhutan, this magical monastery clings to a vertical granite cliff 3,000 feet above the valley floor. Legend has it that Guru Rimpoche, who first brought Buddhism to Bhutan in the 8th Century, flew here on the back of a flying tigress. He meditated in a cave here and the monastery was later built on the spot.

After lunch at the cafe, walk back to the bus and take a short drive to Drugyel Dzong. This fortress sits along a strategic route to Tibet and once provided protection from invasion from the north. From a vantage point on top of the ruins one can see the picturesque Paro Valley below and sacred Chomolhari Mountain above.

As an alternative (less strenuous) excursion, take a drive to the Haa Valley. This valley has only recently been open to tourists. Haa Valley is located at an altitude of approximately 9,000 ft., and about two hours drive from Paro across Chele La Pass at 12,700 ft. This pass is the highest motorable pass in Bhutan and one of the highest in the world. There's a great view of both Paro and Haa Valley, including Chomolhari Mountain from here on a clear day. The reason it was not open for visitors until recently is because it's in a sensitive border area with China (Tibet).

This excursion will also give participants the chance to visit the village of Haa. The surrounding farming community grows wheat, barley and millet and raise yaks for meat.

Tonight, enjoy a wonderful Bhutanese farewell dinner at our hotel and prepare for tomorrow's flight back to Bangkok.

Overnight Zhiwa Ling Resort.

Day 14, Fri. May 11, 2007

Meals Provided: B (Lunch aloft)

BANGKOK

Morning transfer to the airport for our flight to Bangkok. Fly Paro to Bangkok on KB #120 (11:00 - 16:10) Economy Class.

Upon arrival, transfer to the airport hotel, via the pedestrian bridge. The remainder of the evening is free to relax and dine on your own and prepare for tomorrow's journey home.

Overnight Amari Airport Hotel.

Day 15, Sat. May 12, 2007

Meals Provided: B (Aloft)

FLY HOME OR EXTEND TO ANGKOR, CAMBODIA

This morning, transfer back to the airport for your flight home.

Fly Bangkok to Hong Kong on CX #708 (10:00 - 13:40).

NOTE: Suggested Flight Only.

Fly Hong Kong to New York JFK on CX #888 (14:55 - 19:35).

NOTE: Suggested Flight Only.

Optional extension:

Angkor, Cambodia