



## **Bhutan: Land of the Thunder Dragon**

A Wheeler-Windsor Expedition - Designed by Jack Wheeler

Co-Led by Jack Wheeler & Rebel Holiday

**March 28 – April 9, 2025**

EST. 1976



**WHEELER-WINDSOR**  
EXPEDITIONS



# The Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan

This is the Tiger's Nest, the Taktsang Monastery in the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan. It is a country as close to the Shangri-La of James Hilton's 1933 classic "Lost Horizon" as you'll find on earth today.

Smaller than West Virginia, hidden between Tibet and the crest of the Himalayas to the steamy jungles of India, Bhutan is known as the Land of the Thunder Dragon. Independent for centuries and never colonized, Bhutan is a magic place that is spectacularly unique.

Our journey will take place at an exceptionally pleasant time of year to enjoy the Nature all around us.

This expedition will captivate you... and it will fill quickly!

Blue Skies,

Jack and Rebel





## Welcome to Bhutan: Land of the Thunder Dragon

Experiencing Bhutan is a true adventure. Quite frankly, Bhutan is as fabulously exotic as our world gets. At the same time, no other country is as serenely peaceful as Bhutan, no people more contented and cheerful as the Bhutanese, no land more welcoming and hospitable. We invite you to experience the enchantment of Bhutan with us.

Bhutan's culture is a unique mix of the ancient Himalayan animism called Bön and Tibetan Lama Buddhism. The Bhutanese are renowned for being among the happiest people on our planet. They love to laugh, sing, dance, and play – and you'll be invited to join them. Bhutanese happiness is infectious. One very good reason we'll all have a happy time of our lives on our Bhutan adventure.

While the world knows it as “Bhutan” – derived from *Bhota-anta*, Sanskrit for “End of Tibet” – Bhutanese call their country *Druk-yul*, the Dragon Land, and themselves the *Druk-pa*, the Dragon People – specifically the land and people of the Thunder Dragon.

So you won't be surprised to know the national airline of Bhutan is... [\*Druk Air\*](#). Alternatively named Royal Bhutan Airlines, it has an excellent reputation for safety and service – which is good because only Druk Air flies to Bhutan's only international airport of Paro. You'll fly there from Delhi or Bangkok. Ready? Buckle up – here we go!



## *Arrival Day – Day 1 – Friday, March 28*

You should arrive Bhutan today on Druk Air either from Delhi or Bangkok, both flights arrive mid-morning.

You'll be met and transferred to the nearby [Tashi Namgay Resort](#) to luxuriate at the spa and infinity pool, stroll through the lush gardens, and relax. We'll have lunch at the nearby [Namgay Artisanal Brewery](#) and try their Red Rice Lager.

Then we'll have an early Welcome Dinner and get a good night's sleep after traveling a long way from home to get here.





*Day 2 – Saturday, March 29*

This morning we'll sleep in a bit and enjoy a leisurely breakfast, then visit our first *gompa* (Tibetan Buddhist monastery) to receive welcome blessings and a spiritual cleansing from the high lama.



For lunch, we have a home-cooked traditional Bhutanese meal at Aum Deki's Heritage Home.





*Day 2 (continued)*

After lunch, we'll drive for an hour to Bhutan's capital of *Thimphu*. We'll check-in to the highly-rated, [DusitD2 Yarkay](#) hotel to relax.

This evening we enjoy an early dinner featuring an exciting traditional folk dance performance.





*Day 3 – Sunday, March 30*

This morning after a nice Sunday breakfast, we visit the marvelously colorful *Sunday Farmer’s Market*...



We explore the *Simply Bhutan Museum* for the best intro to Bhutan’s history, culture, and traditions. A prime example of just how exotic Dragon Land can be is the museum’s *Chenmoi Dümra garden*. That’s Bhutanese for “Garden of Phalluses.” Yes, for centuries, the Druk-pa have used imagery of the phallus to subdue demons and bless the people of Bhutan.



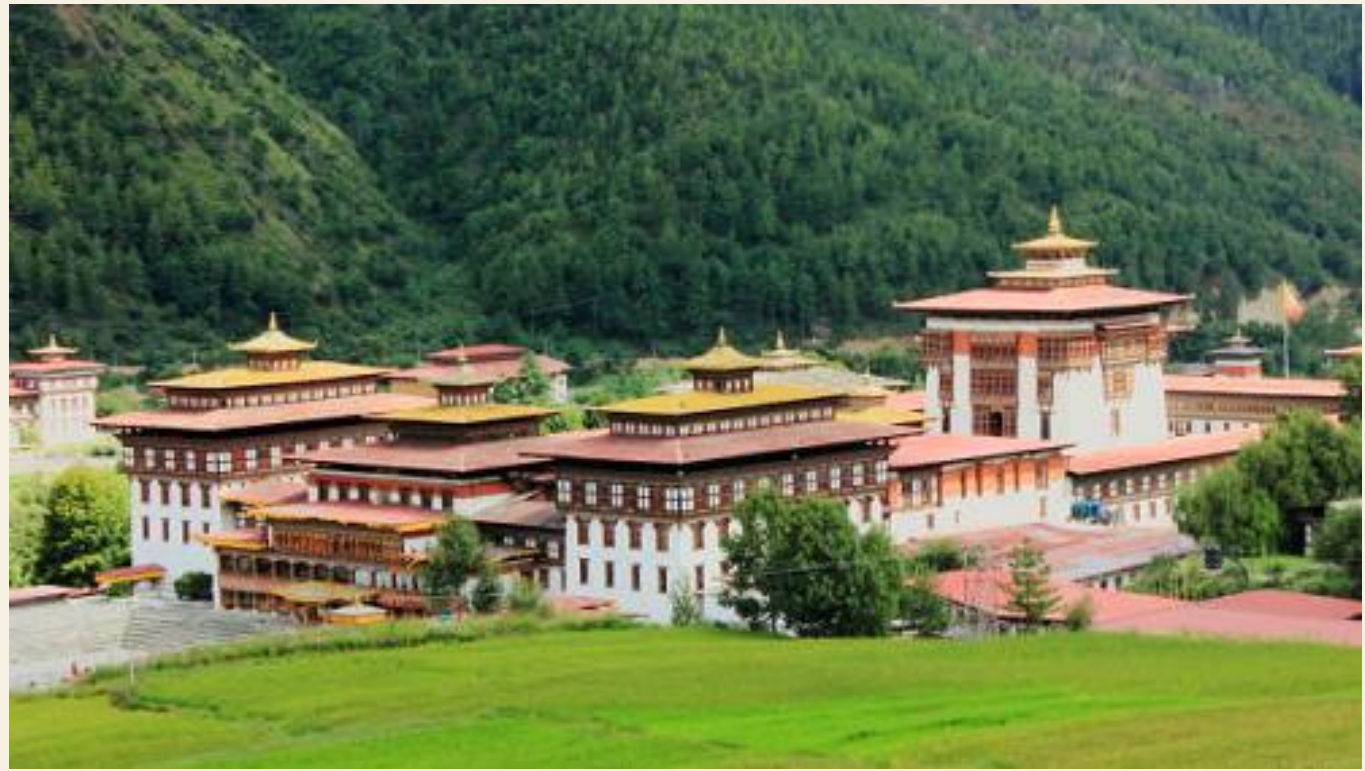


### *Day 3 (continued)*

Every region in the country has a *dzong* or castle-fortress of towering external walls with elaborately painted woodwork surrounding a complex of courtyards, temples, administrative and military offices, and accommodation for lamas (Tibetan Buddhist monks).

In Thimphu, we absorb the magnificent *Tashi Chho Dzong*, seat of the Bhutan government and Offices of the King, *Druk Gyalpo (Dragon King) Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck*. It is considered by many to be the most beautiful government building in the world.

As sunset approaches, we'll retire to the Sky Garden Rooftop Bar at the DusitD2 for their famous Yeti Cocktail or libation of your choice before dinner.





## *Day 4 – Monday, March 31*

We start the day witnessing the colossal gold-plated statue of Sakyamuni Buddha on a mountaintop overlooking the city, one of the world's largest at 169 towering feet high. Sakyamuni is the title given to the historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, who lived ca. 500 BC in present-day Nepal and northern India. The Bhutanese have practiced an esoteric form of Tibetan Buddhism known as Vajrayana since the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD.





**Day 4 (continued)** Back in the center of Thimphu, we explore the *Folk Heritage Museum* established by Bhutan's Royal Family to preserve and honor the traditional and moral values of indigenous Bhutanese culture and rural life. We'll have lunch at the museum's restaurant run by chef Kesang Choeden, who will give us a lesson in preparing traditional Bhutanese cuisine.

Working off this feast, we'll take a stroll through the forest of the Royal Takin Preserve – where we meet the *takin*, Bhutan's beloved national animal looking like a cross between a cow and a goat. Enjoy the mountain air!



We end with exploring Thimphu's local markets for the best traditional handicrafts, before a sunset libation at the Sky Garden.



## *Day 5 – Tuesday, April 1*

We're off to remote rarely visited Eastern Bhutan this morning. It would take us over two days to drive, but a quick Druk Air flight gets us to the town of *Tashigang* in 45 minutes.

We are here to meet the country's most unique people, the *Brokpa* – semi-nomadic yak herders living very traditionally in hidden valleys reachable only by trekking or, as we will use, 4-wheel drive vehicles.





## *Day 5 (continued)*

Our jeeps take us to the Brokpa main village of *Merak*, where we'll be greeted with a welcome *Yak Dance* and a cup of yak butter tea laced with Brokpa firewater.



The Brokpa are yak herders making their living bartering for what they need with yak milk, yak cheese, and woven yak wool.

Women are highly respected – in fact, the Brokpa practice polyandry, a woman is often married to all the brothers in one family. The Brokpa are known as the “Spider People” for their distinctive headwear of yak felt with twisted tufts to prevent rain from running into their faces.

You may have never been with a people so basic as the Brokpa. But you will be in touch with a basic humanity as never before. We'll have dinner with a Brokpa family, and spend the night in the Merak Farm Home.



*Day 6 – Wednesday, April 2*

We'll be exploring the village this morning, and one thing you can count on is that you'll make friends.





*Day 6 (continued)*

Upon return to Tashigang, we discover perched high on a hilltop the dramatic *Tashigang Dzong*.

Where the form of Tibetan Buddhism practiced in Bhutan is known as *Tantra* is on full display in wall paintings and statues.



This is the Tantric *Yab-Yum* physical union of Wisdom and Compassion. Wisdom is personified as the deity Samvara with a blue body, four faces, and twelve arms. He embraces his consort of compassion Vajravarahi.

From our Western perspective, this is as exotic as it gets. It is important to understand that Yab-Yum is considered a sacred act. It is just one example of how Bhutan may stretch our comfort zone to learn ancient ways and practices, giving us a broader perspective on our humanity.



*Day 6 (continued)* We then ensconce ourselves at Tashigan's best, the [Lingkhar Lodge](#). Most likely we'll soon be meeting in the lounge for an aperitif.





## Day 7 – Thursday, April 3

We fly back to Paro early this morning for a day of exploring the Paro Valley. We start with the *National Museum of Bhutan*, (right) with its comprehensive presentation of Bhutan’s history, culture, geography and ecology. It is within the watchtower fortress of *Ta Dzong* above the valley, built in 1649.

Below Ta Dzong is Paro’s landmark, the masterpiece of Bhutan architecture, Rinpung Dzong. Built in 1649, over a hundred lama monks live here today. Dramatically sited, you can see Ta Dzong:



We’ll fully explore Rinpung, where the Keanu Reeves movie “*Little Buddha*” was filmed. Here is the Prayer Hall, below.

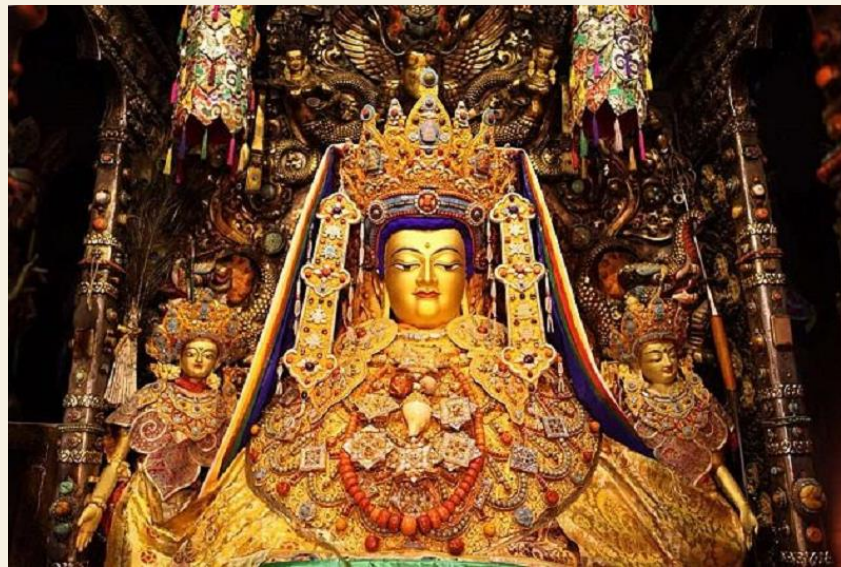




## Day 7 (continued)

We end with Bhutan's oldest shrine and temple, *Kyichu Lhakhang*, built in the early 600's by Tibetan Emperor Songtsen Gampo. You have to be prepared for what Bhutanese consider the "sacred heart" of their country – the beauty and peaceful serenity of the temple and its flower gardens, and the breathtaking art inside.

This is a holy pilgrimage site for all Bhutanese. The gold and jewel-encrusted sacred Jowo altar of Buddha really does take your breath away.



Tonight, we'll enjoy our stay at the [Tenzinling Luxury Villa Tents](#), a haven of peace and tranquility that's luxurious "glamping" like you cannot believe. (Yes, they have en-suite bathrooms.)





## *Day 8 – Friday, April 4*

Today is the day! We're up early and ready for the Icon of Bhutan – *The Tiger's Nest, Taktsang Cliff Monastery*.



*Taktsang is the most sacred place in Bhutan for the Bhutanese people. We will act with respect and reverence.*

As you can see, it's up on a cliff – and we can't fly there like the legendary Lama Padmasambhava did on the back of a magic tiger who founded the Tiger's Nest over a thousand years ago. Meaning we have to walk. Or, you can ride a horse halfway, walk the rest, taking it slowly and easy.

Once there, it's a fantastic once-in-a-lifetime experience. This is a working monastery where dozens of monks live, whom we'll meet. There are many temples, caves, and prayer halls. Here is one of them.





*Day 8 (continued)*

And now, it's time to take a bath! On our way down for Taktsang, we will participate in one of Bhutan's most delightful customs – a *hot stone bath*.



At a local farm guest home, stones are heated in a fire then safely placed in pure river water mixed with flowers and herbs, both releasing medicinal properties and soothing aromas. Immersed in the water, stress simply floods out of your body. We'll return to the Tenzinling at day's end utterly refreshed and relaxed.



## Day 9 – Saturday, April 5

This morning we drive past Thimphu to the original capital of Bhutan, *Punakha*. The highway takes us over a 10,000ft pass called the *Dochu La* (“la” means “pass”) for a glorious 180° view of the Himalayas.

Before Punakha, we stop for lunch in a village you’ll never forget.



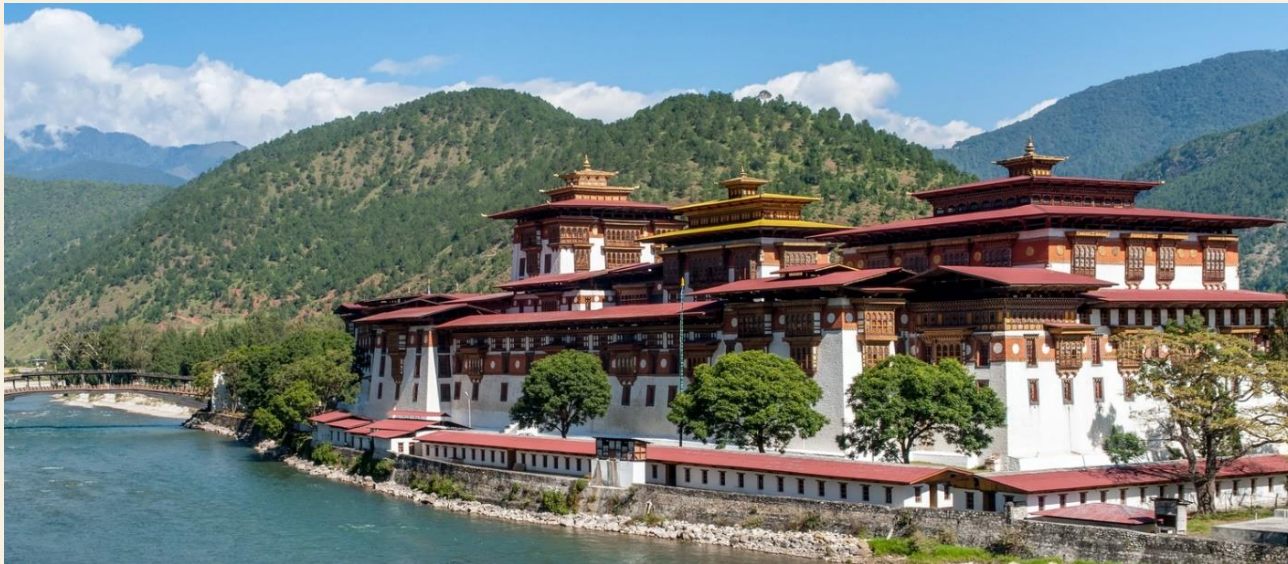
It’s the fertility village of *Sopsokha*, where every home and store has walls painted with one or more murals of phalli to ward off evil spirits and invoke the fertility gods. Nearby, Fertility Temple of *Chimi Lhakhang*, founded in 1499 by the “Divine Madman,” Lama Drukpa Kunley (1455-1529). It is a pilgrimage site to this day for women desiring to have children.





*Day 9 (continued)*

Punakha, as Bhutan's ancient capital is still its religious center. That center is the *Punakha Dzong* along the bank of the Mo Chhu River, and with its Golden Buddha Prayer Hall. We'll spend some time experiencing this.





*Day 9 (continued)*

Afterwards, we cross the amazing 550 foot-long *Punakha Suspension Bridge* over the Po Chhu River. No worries, you'll be with villagers, monks, and kids who traverse it every day.



We settle in for the evening at Punakha's oasis of luxurious serenity, the [\*Dhensa Boutique Resort\*](#).



*Day 10 – Sunday, April 6*

We begin our day with a breakfast view to remember overlooking the Punakha Dzong. We'll then drive up the Punakha Valley and a short hike to reach the most spectacularly beautiful edifice in the country, the *Khamsum Yulley Nyamgal Chorten*.

Yet its purpose is what counts --to provide spiritual protection, peace and harmony for all those who enter. It's not what you see with your eyes but what you feel in your soul that really matters here.





*Day 10 (continued)*

We're here high above the Mo Chhu River that you can see in the photo (right) and that's how we'll return to Punakha – by rafting down the river. It's not real white water but a nice and easy Class II float enabling you to relax and enjoy nature. We end just past the Punakha Dzong.





*Day 10 (continued)*

After lunch at a charming local café, we venture up a valley above Punakha to the Talo Sangnacholing Gompa.

Today we witness a 300 year-old annual religious festival called a *Tshechu* featuring elaborately costumed and masked dancers. It is spectacular – and a lot of fun for everybody!





## *Day 11 - Monday, April 7*

We spend the morning on a leisurely drive to Paro. Upon return, we transfer to our new lodging, the 5-star [Como Uma Paro](#) and take prompt advantage of its luxurious spa facilities.



This evening we'll be at a traditional Bhutanese night club, to relax with a drink in hand and experience Bhutanese culture, music, dance, and food.





## Day 12 – Tuesday, April 8

It's our last day and we start off early making the most of it. We return to Rinpung Dzong for the first day of *the Paro Tshechu*. It is a gloriously celebratory yet at the same time sacred extravaganza.



At day's end, we'll make a last excursion to downtown Paro for final shopping and exploration. We have a Farewell Reception at the Uma Bar, followed by a particularly enjoyable Farewell Dinner.





*Day 13 – Wednesday, April 9*

Today is Departure Day for flights back home or onward.

By now, we will have made new friends or restrengthened friendships.

From now on we will always have Bhutan in our hearts, the memories of this extraordinary Happy Land of the Thunder Dragon will never fade.







WHEELER-WINDSOR  
EXPEDITIONS

## *Bhutan - Land of the Thunder Dragon*

### **Expedition Details – March 28 – April 9, 2025**

*All Inclusive per person:* \$12,800 Double occupancy. \$3,800 deposit at registration; then flexible payments.

**Register:** [Bhutan-Land of the Thunder Dragon-Mar 28-Apr 9, 2025](#)

*All Inclusive:* This includes the excellent lodging, authentic and delicious meals, all group activities and excursions in the itinerary. Transportation during expedition, including airport transfers. All accommodations (double occupancy), all meals with group. Note: On this trip, we have only five double rooms, so if you're not part of a couple, please try to find a travel buddy.

*Cost Excludes:* International flights. Any meals, services, or activities not with group. Personal items: laundry, alcohol, gratuities. Hotel single supplement.

*Travel:* If you do not have a travel agent, contact us for a recommendation.

*Travel Insurance and Refunds:* Full refund of payment on the condition of a fully-paid acceptable replacement for you. We strongly recommend “any reason” trip cancellation insurance. A travel agent can assist you with this.

**Contact Rebel Holiday to discuss:** [holiday@wheelerwindsorexpeditions.com](mailto:holiday@wheelerwindsorexpeditions.com)

**Important caveat:** *Every effort will be made to adhere to the itinerary above. Due to the nature of travel, the itinerary may need to be altered. Participants agree to accept any modification with a cheerful mindset.*





**Jack Wheeler**



**Rebel Holiday**

EST.  1976



**WHEELER-WINDSOR**  
EXPEDITIONS

**Our Expedition Leadership Team for  
Bhutan: Land of the Thunder Dragon**

This exploration combines natural beauty with exotic culture, primitive peoples, authentic communities, luxury, and adventure. We'll show you an incredible part of the world that few ever have the privilege to see.

Join us to experience it!



**Dr. Jack Wheeler**, has been called the “real life Indiana Jones” by the Wall Street Journal has traveled to all 193 countries on all seven continents. He’s had two parallel careers: one in adventure and exploration with *Wheeler Expeditions*; the other in the field of geopolitics. After receiving his Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of Southern California, where he lectured on Aristotelian ethics.

His adventures began early. The youngest Eagle Scout in history at age 12, he climbed the Matterhorn at age 14, swam the Hellespont (LIFE Magazine 12/12/60) and lived with Amazon headhunters at 16, hunted a man-eating tiger in Vietnam at 17, and started an export business in Vietnam at 19. He wrote *The Adventurer’s Guide* (New York: Mackay, 1975), described by Merv Griffin as “the definitive book for anyone wishing to lead a more adventurous and exciting life.” He has three “first contacts” with tribes never before contacted by the outside world: a clan of Aushiri in the Amazon, the Wali-ali-fo in New Guinea, and a band of Bushmen in the Kalahari. He retraced Hannibal’s route over the Alps with elephants; led numerous expeditions in Central Asia, China, Tibet, Africa, the Amazon and elsewhere, including 21 expeditions to the North Pole; and has been listed in *The Guinness Book of World Records* for the first free fall sky-dive in history at the North Pole. His company has conducted exclusive expeditions to dozens of countries across the globe for over 35 years.

Jack founded Wheeler Expeditions in 1976, today he and his sons lead bespoke expeditions each year to unusual destinations. The company has conducted exclusive expeditions to dozens of countries across the globe for over 35 years. On a personal note, in the early 80’s he married Ms. Rebel Holiday in St Tropez, France, and these days, Wheeler Expeditions is a family affair. They are delighted to work with their two grown sons also living adventurous lives and leading expeditions: Brandon Holiday Wheeler and Jackson Holiday Wheeler.

**Rebel Holiday** has traveled to over 90 countries and has co-led expeditions for 3 decades. She has lived in 5 countries and speaks three languages (English, Spanish, and Portuguese.) Professionally, she is involved in business and the arts. Wherever she goes in the world, Rebel is most interested in people and cultures. She is passionate about cuisine and finds the best restaurants, and special activities on trips. She enjoys sharing the beauty of the world.