



BHUTAN

Bhutan: Land of the Thunder Dragon

Designed by Jack Wheeler

Co-Led by Jack Wheeler & Rebel Holiday

October 31 – November 10, 2026



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 Wheeler and Rebel Holiday
Richard Bangs



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.

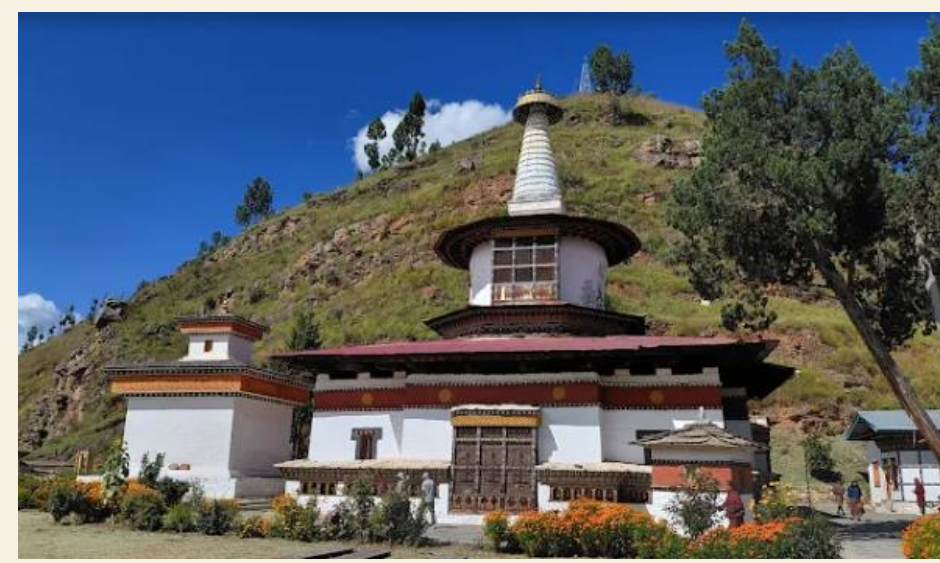
While the world knows it as “Bhutan” – derived from *Bhota-anta*, Sanskrit for “End of Tibet” – Bhutanese call their country *Druk-yul*, the Dragon Land, and themselves the *Druk-pa*, the Dragon People – specifically the land and people of the Thunder Dragon.

Now 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!



Day 1 – Saturday, October 31 – Arrival Day

This we arrive at the Paro International Airport on the early flights from Kathmandu or Bangkok. We visit our first *gompa* (Tibetan Buddhist monastery) to receive welcome blessings and a spiritual cleansing from the high lama. This is an extraordinary way to begin our journey.



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

We will overnight at 5* Le Meridien Hotel.

Day 1 – Saturday, October 31 – Arrival Day (continued)

We will check into our hotel for the evening, Le Meridien, a beautiful resort spa near the river.

You may want to relax or enjoy the gym or spa facilities.

We'll have an early dinner with a view and retire early.



Here we are well positioned to the airport for our adventure in the morning to visit the Brokpa.

Day 2 – Sunday, November 1 – A Visit to the Brokpa People

The adventure begins as we're off to remote rarely visited Eastern Bhutan this morning. We skip the 2-day drive with a quick Druk Air flight to the town of *Trashigang* in under an hour. After lunch in town, we'll head to Merak village.

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.

When 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.



Day 2 – Sunday, November 1 (continued)

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 3 – Monday, November 2

After breakfast, we'll be exploring the village this morning and then take a hike up to see the panoramic views.

By the time we leave late morning, one thing you can count on is that you'll have made friends.



We'll drive back in our jeeps to Trashigang (pronounced like "Tashigang") for lunch and to continue our exploration...

Day 3 – Monday, November 2 (continued)

After lunch we return to Trashigang, we discover perched high on a hilltop the dramatic *Trashigang 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.

We overnight at Druk Deothjung to be near the airport in the morning.

Day 4 – Tuesday, November 3

Transfer to the Yonphula airport this morning fly back to Paro, then transfer to Bhutan's capital of *Thimphu*. It's still early when we arrive at the top-rated, Pema Hotel (4.9 out of 5 in Trip Advisor). It is a lovely hotel with excellent service, delicious food.



Day 4 – Tuesday, November 3 (continued)

We'll enjoy lunch at Babesa Village Restaurant, housed in a centuries old farm-home. Then you'll see the **National Textile Museum** that presents Bhutan's rich textile heritage. You'll see how the intricate woven Bhutanese fabrics are both an art and an essential part of their culture and daily life. Their unique clothing is beautifully handwoven kiras, ghos, and thangkas, made from silk, wool, and cotton, reflecting the distinct patterns and colors of Bhutan's different regions. We'll see the Royal Collection, featuring crowns, dresses, and accessories worn by Bhutan's royal family.

You'll have noticed that many Bhutanese wear their cultural clothing, **men wear a gho** and **women wear a kira**. They consider it a part of their national identity. The men's gho is a knee-length robe tied at the waist by a cloth belt called a *kera*. It forms a large pouch in front, historically used for carrying food bowls and small items, now typically used for a phone. The kira is an ankle-length dress made of a large rectangular piece of cloth wrapped around the body, fastened at the shoulders with silver hooks called *koma*. It has an inner layer (*wonju*) and a jacket (*toego*).

After lunch there's time to visit the craft Bazaar.



Day 4 – Tuesday, November 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.

Then we return to the Pema and have a break before a relaxing dinner.



Day 5 – Wednesday, November 4

Today 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 7th century AD.



Day 5 – Wednesday, November 4 (continued)

We transfer 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 5 – Wednesday, November 4 (continued)

We arrive at the [Dhensa Boutique Resort](#), Punakha's oasis of luxurious serenity, we will be here two nights. After our adventures, we're ready to relax and recharge, overlooking the beautiful river. A spa treatment or soak, even a massage might be perfect about now.



Day 6 – Thursday, November 5

After a leisurely breakfast at the hotel, we'll 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.

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.

All the fresh air will give us an appetite and we have home-cooked farm-sourced lunch at Aum Karma's.



We settle in for a relaxing afternoon and dinner and our 2nd night at the [*Dhensa Boutique Resort*](#).



Day 7 – Friday, November 6

After breakfast at the Dhensa, we depart to continue on our journey. 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.



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.)

After stopping for lunch overlooking the river, we carry on to Thimphu where we feel right at home back at the Pema Hotel to overnight.



Day 8 – Saturday, November 7

This morning we visit the **National Memorial Chorten**, also known as the Thimphu Chorten, is a prominent Buddhist stupa located in the heart of Thimphu, Bhutan. Built in **1974** to honor the third Druk Gyalpo, **Jigme Dorji Wangchuck** (1928–1972), it is a vital center of worship for residents and a major landmark for visitors.

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 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!



Day 8 – Saturday, November 7 (continued)

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.

We’ll also see some local crafts...



Day 8 – Saturday, November 7 (continued)

When we arrive in Paro, we check in at a resort called Tenzinling Tented Villas with luxury, en-suite tents with a view of nature.

It is very conveniently located for access to where we'll be going tomorrow – legendary Tiger's Nest and Taktsang Monastery, very revered place by the Bhutanese.



Day 9 – Sunday, November 8

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 9 – Sunday, November 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 our hotel at day's end utterly refreshed and relaxed.

We return to Tenzingling for dinner and a good night's sleep.

Day 10 – Monday, November 9

This morning you may like to relax. Or you may choose to enjoy a visit to 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 10 – Monday, November 9 (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.



We will take a break for the rest of the afternoon – and meet tonight for our **Celebration Dinner!**

We have much to celebrate after this extraordinary, unique and life memorable adventure discovering Bhutan.

Day 11 – Tuesday, Nov 10

Today is Departure Day for flights back home or onward on your journey.

By now, we will have made new friends or strengthened 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.

We will wish you Blue Skies!

Your Leader Team,

Jack Wheeler

Rebel Holiday

Richard Bangs





WHEELER-WINDSOR
EXPEDITIONS

Bhutan - Land of the Thunder Dragon

Expedition Details – October 31 – November 10, 2026

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

Register: [Bhutan-Land of the Thunder Dragon-Oct-31-Nov 10, 2026](#)

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.

Cost Excludes: International flights. Any meals, services, or activities not with group. Personal items: laundry, alcohol, gratuities. Hotel single supplement \$1,750.

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

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



Richard Bangs



**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. Our expedition leaders have been leading international expeditions for decades and look forward to showing 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. 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. Jack founded Wheeler Expeditions in 1976, and has conducted exclusive expeditions to dozens of countries across the globe for over 45 years. On a personal note, in the early 80’s he married Ms. Rebel Holiday in St Tropez, France, and Wheeler Expeditions has involved everyone in the family. Their two grown sons have often led expeditions and are living adventurous lives. Wheeler-Windsor Expeditions is a joint-venture with Edward Windsor, Lord Downpatrick.



Rebel Holiday has traveled to 90 countries and has co-led expeditions for 3 decades. She has lived in several countries and speaks three languages (English, Portuguese, and Spanish.) She is involved in business and the arts. Wherever she goes in the world, Rebel is most interested in people and cultures. Rebel has developed and teaches an information system relative to the patterns in nature, including humans. She is passionate about the study of Harmony, which can be found worldwide. Rebel is passionate about cuisine and finds the best restaurants and special activities on trips. She currently enjoys sharing the beauty of countries around the world, while based in Portugal. She is a founder of Extraordinary Travelers Club and Editor of the Club Monthly Dispatch.



Richard Johnston Bangs is an American author and television personality focusing on international travel. He began exploring rivers at an early age. He became passionate about adventure travel and started his company in 1973. He is considered to a pioneer in expedition and adventure travel and is the co-founder of Mt. Sobek. He is the host and executive producer of a series of American Public Television specials, including Richard Bangs Quests and Richard Bangs Adventures with Purpose. Richard is the author of twenty books. He has led countless adventurous expeditions on all 7 continents since the 1970’s and continues to lead select expeditions. Currently he is an active advisor to select innovative travel related ventures. He is a founder of Extraordinary Travelers Club. He is the lead writer for the Club Dispatch.