



Wanderlust & Lipstick  
P.O. Box 16102  
Seattle, WA 98116

# Trekking in Eastern Bhutan

**Itinerary dates: October 12 – 28, 2010**

**Tour leader: Beth Whitman**

The **Eastern Trekking tour to Bhutan** takes you into the heart of this isolated region which was closed to the outside world until 2009! Come be among the **very first** to visit this remote and mysterious region.

This 17-day journey begins in **Northeast India** with jungle safaris and then includes a **5-night trek in Bhutan**. This takes you into the isolated valleys of **Merak** and **Sakten** at approximately 11,500 feet and 9,700 respectively. At the highest point, the group will cross over the **Nyuksang la Pass** at 13,500 feet.

The tour provides extra time in this region so that you can make the most of this special area with its unique culture, rich history and very friendly people. This is a rare opportunity not to be missed!

## **October 12, 2010**

### **Day 1 – Kolkata – Guwahati** (by air)

The group will be met in Guwahati by a local guide and transferred from Guwahati airport to an area just outside of Kaziranga Park, a World Heritage Site located approximately 5 hours drive from the airport. We will reach Kaziranga in the evening and stay overnight at Landmark Woods – a jungle resort. Dinner and overnight at hotel.

## **October 13, 2010**

### **Day 2 – Kaziranga**

This day will be spent around Kaziranga National Park and will be an exciting start to the journey. We will depart early in the morning for an elephant safari followed by a jeep safari through the park in the late morning.

In the afternoon, we will visit an ethnic Assamese village and enjoy an Assamese lunch in the village itself. Afterward, we'll drive toward the eastern range of the park for a boat cruise in an area where we will have the chance of seeing endangered dolphins. The area is also known for its vast array of bird life.

After a full day we will dinner and overnight at hotel.

## **October 14, 2010**

### **Day 3 – Guwahati – Samdrup Jonkhar**

After an early breakfast, we will drive (about 8 hours) toward Bhutan. We'll enjoy lunch along the way and then make our way to the border where we will clear customs in the small town of Samdrup Jongkhar, Bhutan. Dinner and overnight at hotel in Bhutan.

**October 15, 2010**

**Day 4 – Samdrup Jongkhar – Trashigang**

After an early breakfast, we will drive north to Trashigang. As the road ascends, we pass through a variety of vegetation zones in the Himalayan foothills. Looking back we should get a distant view of the Indian plains. Heading further north, the road is so high that we may be above the clouds! The roadside is rich in plants including ferns, rhododendrons and primulas.

Late in the afternoon, we will visit **Trashigang Dzong** which houses the monastic institute for monks and administrative center for the valley. Dinner and overnight at basic hotel.

★ **HIGHLIGHT!** The cultural change is dramatic here and you'll notice that more people wear traditional Bhutanese dress compared to Samdrup Jongkhar.

**Note – on trekking days, you will only be responsible for your daybag. The bulk of your items will be carried by porters and/or yaks.**

**October 16, 2010**

**Day 5 – Trashigang – Ranjung (by car), then hike to Sayphug**

On this day, we will drive from Trashigang (3740') to Radhi and Kardung Village (6,000') which is the starting point for our trek. It is a steady climb on a slippery footpath through forest, occasionally along the Murbi Chu (river). The walking distance is 3 to 4 hours until we reach camp where we will have dinner and overnight.

★ **HIGHLIGHT!** There's nothing like hiking through near-virgin Himalayan forest. This will be the start to a very special journey through this pristine area.

**October 17, 2010**

**Day 6 – Sayphug – Merak**

We will begin our trek today by heading toward Thumbursa la (10,700') about a 2-hour climb from camp. From this pass, we will hike another 3 to 4 hours which will take us into the valley of **Merak** via Gengou. Here we will stop for dinner and overnight at our camp.

**October 18, 2010**

**Day 7 – Merak – Sakten**

In the morning, we will either visit the **monastery** in Merak or **explore the village** where we can watch the nomads **weaving yak hair**. The hike from Merak to Sakten will take about 2.5 hours with a steady climb crossing over the **Nyuksang la Pass** (13,500'). A steep 3-hour descent from the pass and then a short climb up will take us to a **chorten** (stupa). Another 30 minute walk will take us down into the valley of **Sakteng**. This spectacular area is located in a big open space surrounded by heavily forested mountains. Dinner and overnight at our camp.

**October 19, 2010**

**Day 8 – Sakten**

**Today is a well-deserved rest day.** It is worth spending time here to explore the **Sakten Valley** which includes 80 households. The residents are very religious and toward the north and east of Sakten, there are many important **Buddhist temples**.

We will have a chance to visit the local monasteries and **enjoy the valley** during the day and in the evening there will be a **cultural program**.

★ **HIGHLIGHT!** There will be many things about this day that you'll find to be a highlight, but any time there is a cultural program, it gives you a chance to see how Bhutan has managed to hold on to its cultural traditions.

**October 20, 2010**

**Day 9 – Sakten – Jyongkhar**

From **Sakten**, we will continue trekking on to **Jyongkhar** (5,800') crossing **Munde la Pass** (9,600'). There are a couple of small climbs and descents before reaching Jyongkhar during this walk of about 5 to 6 hours. Along the way we will enjoy lunch and then dinner and overnight at our camp.

**October 21, 2010**

**Day 10 – Jyongkhar – Phong Me – Ranjung (end of trek)**

From Jyongkhar to Phong Me, the trek will take about 3 hours with a stiff climb of 1 hour before reaching Phong Me. From here we will meet with our transport and then drive to **Trashigang** via Ranjung. Dinner and overnight at hotel. (Yeah!)

**October 22, 2010**

**Day 11 – Trashigang – Trashi Yangtse – Mongar**

Today we will drive to **Trashi Yangtse** and then on to **Mongar**. Along the way, we'll reach Gom Kora and pass a luxuriant waterfall. We'll stop here to visit the Gom Kora Monastery, which was founded in the 8th century, by Guru Rimpoche.

We will then continue our drive until we reach **Chorten Kora**, built in the 1700's and considered to be the largest chorten in Bhutan. We'll then head into the valley of **Trashi Yangtse** where the locals are very famous for their woodwork. It's then off to Mongar over the **Khorila Pass** (8,000'). A picnic lunch will be served en-route. Dinner and overnight at hotel.

**October 23, 2010**

**Day 12 – Mongar to Bumthang**

There will be a **tsechu** (festival) in Mongar on this day. We will have time in the morning to visit this special event before we continue our drive west on to Central Bhutan.

This is a very unique opportunity that few westerners have experienced. We will travel via a series of switchbacks through the Thrimshing-la Pass (12,000'), which is a protected national park for West Bengal tigers! It also hosts a botanical garden for rhododendrons. It will take about 7 hours to reach Bumthang including a short stop in the Ura Valley. Dinner and overnight hotel.

★ **HIGHLIGHT!** To witness the costumes, dancing and singing of one of Bhutan's tsechus is a treat! It will be easy to see how they manage to hang on to their culture after experiencing one of these festivals.

**October 24, 2010**

**Day 13 – Bumthang**

This is one of the most spectacular valleys in Bhutan and also the heart of Buddhism. In the morning we will hike to visit the **Tamshing Monastery** and **Kurjey Lhakhang**. We also visit **Jambay Lhakhang** and **Jakar Dzong**. Dinner and overnight at hotel.

 **HIGHLIGHT!** In addition to the beautiful landscape, this area has numerous important monasteries. Guru Rimpoche and his lineage of Tertons (treasure finders) spent much time here and influenced the sprouting of many temples.

**October 25, 2010**

**Day 14 – Bumthang – Wangdue**

Today after breakfast we will drive to **Wangdue** via **Gangtey** and over **Pele-la Pass** (11,000'). The drive is approximately 6.5 hours, climbing steadily through semi-tropical vegetation with an alpine environment of rhododendrons and dwarf bamboo.

We will visit the **Gangtey Gompa** (monastery) which was recently renovated. Nearby is the Phobjikha Valley which is the winter home of black-necked cranes that migrate from the arid plains in the Tibet and Ladakh. After the visit to Gangtey Valley, we will continue the drive to Wangdue. Dinner and overnight at hotel.

 **HIGHLIGHT!** This area is well known as the most beautiful valley in the Himalayas!

**October 26, 2010**

**Day 15 – Wangdue – Thimphu**

After breakfast, we will drive over the **Dochu-la Pass** (10,000') to **Thimphu**, where we will stop for lunch. Afterward, we will have time to visit a number of sights including one or two of the following: **Institute of Traditional Medicine**; the **Folk Heritage Museum**; the **Textile Museum**; **Tashi Choe dzong**; **Zilukha Nunnery**; the **National Zoo** (really more of a preserve for the national animal, the Takin) and the **Handicrafts Emporium**. Dinner at a local restaurant and overnight at hotel.

 **HIGHLIGHT!** Thimphu is the busiest city in Bhutan and as such is also a cultural center with many sights to see and experience.

**October 27, 2010**

**Day 16 – Thimphu – Paro (Hike to Taktsang)**

We will depart early from Thimphu and drive into the valley of Paro. Here, we will begin our journey up to **Taktsang Monastery** (Tiger's Nest). The walk takes about 2 hours and there is a cafe half way up where there are spectacular views of the monastery perched on the side of the mountain.

We will have time at the monastery to view the many temples there and to enjoy the view.

Dinner and overnight at hotel.

 **HIGHLIGHT!** For many, this might be the pinnacle of the entire trip – to at least see the iconic Tiger's Nest in person.

**October 28, 2010**

**Day 17 – Paro – Departure to India or Bangkok**

In the morning we will enjoy a final breakfast at the hotel and then depart for the airport where we'll say goodbye to Bhutan (for now!).