



BHUTAN BESPOKE

P I L G R I M A G E





ॐ Bhutan Yatra ॐ

Introduction

The Sanskrit word **Yatra** refers to a journey of purification. Along the way, the traveller accumulates merit through the practice of visiting and communing with revered places imbued with sacred power. A Yatra is a path of inner transformation and self-realisation, helping us cultivate greater courage, resilience, and resolve. These qualities naturally find expression in every aspect of our lives.

Bhutan may be one of the last places on Earth where the Dharma is still lived with such devotion and vibrancy. Few places hold such a concentration of spiritual energy within so small an area, sustained by an entire nation devoted to Buddhist practice. Immersed in this atmosphere, among the warm and welcoming people of the Dragon Kingdom and surrounded by landscapes of transcendent beauty, Yatra participants are invited to awaken to profound spiritual wisdom. The outer pilgrimage becomes a catalyst for an inner remembering of our true essence, our Buddha nature.

This twelve-night Yatra across Bhutan is designed to help you explore and reconnect with your inner Self. Encouraging a way of living that responds to both life and others with greater compassion and courage. A Yatra journey sets unseen forces in motion, continuing to work within long after the journey has ended, deepening mindfulness, clarity. Helping you find peace and inner resources along your path.





ॐ Preparing for the Journey ॐ

To make the most of these two weeks of your life you will devote to this pilgrimage, here are a few things to note.

- The world will keep moving – with or without you. Hence, pilgrimage is a precious opportunity to put aside your normal life: your distractions, desires, deadlines, assumptions, and comforts. It offers a chance to focus instead on creating time and space for introspection and contemplation – to renounce the mundane and give yourself a fortnight to find greater meaning and venture further and deeper within.
- Buddhists believe in the interconnectedness of all phenomena, including all of life, relationships, moments in time. Fostering a sense of lifelong connection with the place, people and fellow pilgrims is highly encouraged.
- The word Buddha means “awakened one”. Buddhists believe in the inherent Bodhicitta (seed of Buddhahood) in every sentient being. If one can move beyond an intellectual grasping of this concept, to experiential realization, it is possible to reach that state of innate wisdom, compassion, and loving kindness, within oneself.
- Dharma means “universal truth”. It doesn’t mean religion. During the course of a pilgrimage, one goes deeper within, deciding what is important and what is not, as well as what serves, and what does not. One should be both willing and prepared to go through intense moments of transformation – should they arise. Yatra pilgrimage is a rare and fortuitous opportunity for personal, emotional and spiritual growth.





❧ The Journey Within ❧

Connecting with Self and Other

DAYS	ITINERARY	HIGHLIGHTS
D1	ENTER THE DRAGON — We begin our sacred itinerary at the small and unassuming, but most sacred temple, in the Paro Valley – <u>The Talking Tara Temple</u> .	<i>A ritual and reverential introduction to the Dragon Kingdom.</i>
D2	HONOURING THE DIVINE AND SELF — We drive up a mountain and pay our respects, 12,000 feet up, at Bhutan's highest temple. Legend has it that a 13th century yogi identified these peaks as the celestial abode of Avalokiteshvara – the Bodhisattva of compassion. At <u>Nyechen Dongkala</u> , on the highest peak, we participate in a ceremony in honour of Bhutan's protector deities, and extend loving kindness to ourselves. After visiting the sacred Dra Karp Caves, the day ends with blessings from the sacred Kangyur at <u>Euthok Gonpa</u> .	<i>Caves where even the worst karma – such as killing one's parents – can be cleansed. And a Gonpa blessed by the Medicine Buddha, where wishes can be made for healing.</i>
D3	THE LEGENDARY TIGER'S NEST — One of the two holiest places in Vajrayana Buddhism, and the most iconic of all the religious sites in Bhutan, Taktshang, literally " <u>Tiger's Nest</u> ", is our place of pilgrimage for the day.	<i>A temple dear to Padmasambhava, that draws thousands of pilgrims each day to its cliffside eyrie.</i>
D4	INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHISM — We drive to central Bhutan. Along the way, we honour the 108 <u>Druk Wangyal Chortens</u> , perched at Dochula Pass (3,100 meters, or 10,171 ft) before reaching our destination, Gangtey.	<i>108 Chortens, like guardians of the dharma, to witness our passage on another stage of our Yatra.</i>





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Connecting with Self and Other

DAYS	ITINERARY	HIGHLIGHTS
D5	THE SACRED VALLEY OF PHOBJIKHA — We spend the day in the alpine valley of Gangtey and Phobjikha, and visit the 14th century <u>Ngelung Drechaling</u> and <u>Gangtey Gonpa</u> , the latter one of the largest in Bhutan, and a mother temple of the Pema Lingpa tradition.	<i>The perfect setting to study and contemplate the four elements – Earth, Water, Fire and Wind – in Buddhism.</i>
D6	ENTER THE HIDDEN LAND — We drive to the sacred valley of Bumthang, and visit <u>Trongsa Dzong</u> , once a magnificent and significant citadel in medieval Bhutan, that controlled the entire eastern and central regions of the country.	<i>Here, at the abode of Palden Lhamo Mahakali, impermanence and change have turned what was once a fortress stronghold into a monastic centre and home of the dharma.</i>
D7	WHERE BUDDHISM TOOK ROOT — We spend the day in Bumthang, visiting the temples of <u>Kurje</u> , <u>Jambay</u> , Tamshing, and Kencho Sum. Kurje is the spot where Buddhism took root, after the visit of the Indian Mahaguru, Padmasambhava, widely regarded as the second Buddha by the Bhutanese.	<i>Walking in the footsteps of the Second Buddha, we reflect upon the first and most evident mark of existence – suffering, or dukkha.</i>
D8	LEAVING BUMTHANG — We drive back to Punakha and, on the way, visit Prakar Temple and Manor, home to some of the rarest relics. But today, it is to the statue of <u>Guru Padmasambhava</u> that we bow.	<i>At the feet of the Mahaguru, we practice anatta: seeing through the illusion of self as personal, separate and distinct from the whole.</i>
D9	LET IT FLOW — We hike for two hours, to Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten in Punakha. This spectacular temple is situated on a pine-clad ridge, overlooking the valley of the mighty and spectacular Mo Chu river – down which we raft after lunch!	<i>Along trails and on the water, we allow the beauty and power of nature to nourish our contemplation of compassion and loving kindness – the core practices in Mahayana Buddhism.</i>





ཧྲུག་ The Journey Within ཧྲུག་

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D 10	FINDING YOUR AUTHENTIC SELF — We visit <u>Chimi Lhakhang</u> , the fertility temple, and are introduced to the “Divine Madman”, 15th-century yogi <u>Drukpa Kuenley</u> . His unconventional wisdom and unorthodox practice of the dharma have made him one of the most popular yogis in Tibetan Buddhism.	<i>The path of dharma exists in many forms – there are times when shocking, almost profane ways may cut like a diamond through the veil of illusion. And behind the eccentric identity, what remains? And who are you, in essence?</i>
D 11	LIFE AS A BARDO — We spend the day at the Wangdue Festival. Dressed for the occasion in gho and kira, to blend in with the locals and culture, we enjoy traditional dances and immerse ourselves in Bhutanese ways.	<i>A festival as a transition – a symbolic bardo, as we leave behind everyday reality for a day – before rejoining it as though renewed, or even reborn...</i>
D 12	FINAL BLESSINGS — We spend our last day in Bhutan blessed by water on this holy Blessed Water Day. We also attend the Great Thimphu Festival, and visit Bhutan’s largest citadel, Taschichho Dzong, the Fortress of Auspicious Sacredness.	<i>It is believed that on this one day, water is blessed by all the devas and dakinis. Thus cleansed, we can reflect on what holds sacred significance for us.</i>
D 13	LETTER TO SELF — We close our Yatra pilgrimage in the same way we initiated it – with a self-reflection that we joyfully dedicate to the place and the locals, and share with our fellow travellers, to cement an unbreakable connection between us all. Departure from Bhutan.	<i>The circle closes where it began – with a letter, and a bond that outlasts the trip.</i>











ཧྲཱི་ The Dharma Talks ཧྲཱི་

Dharma Talk 1: Why Bhutan?

Dharma Talk 2: Interconnectedness — The Foundation of Bhutanese society.

Dharma Talk 3: From Buddha to Vajrayana: The Evolution of Buddhism.

Dharma Talk 4: The four elements in Buddhism: Earth, Water, Fire and Wind.

Dharma Talk 5: The Three marks of existence: Impermanence.

Dharma Talk 6: The first mark of existence: Dukkha (Unsatisfactoriness).

Dharma Talk 7: The liberating mark of existence: Understanding Anatta.

Dharma Talk 8: Compassion and loving kindness — The core practices of Mahayana Buddhism.

Dharma Talk 9: What is your authentic self?

Dharma Talk 10: What is the opposite of compassion?

Dharma Talk 11: What is sacred to you?

These dharma talks aim to help us expand our consciousness and deepen our understanding of the dharma. As we open our hearts and minds, we glimpse the possibility of a more spacious existence, no longer constricted by our perceived limited self. Bhutan lives and breathes this wisdom – are you willing to take a leap of faith and be transformed?







The Instructor:

Dorji Wangchuk (PhD)

An award-winning documentary filmmaker, university professor and researcher, with a doctorate in communication studies from the University of Macau, and a Laurea degree in engineering from the University of Bologna (Italy).

His research explores the question of traditional Bhutanese identity and spirituality, as well as the influence of technology and modernity.

He is the former Director of Communication for the Royal Family of Bhutan, and Dean of the Royal University of Bhutan. Dr. Dorji also led the historic introduction of television to Bhutan in 1999.

His family lineage traces back to a number of significant Buddhist teachers and yogis in Vajrayana Buddhism in eastern Bhutan.





The journey begins on 12th September and concludes on 24th September 2026

For inquiries, questions and reservations, please contact:

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