

The Land of The Thunder Dragon & a Side-dish of India

18 Day Fully Escorted Tour with Peter Whitehead

04 - 22 October 2017



The Land of The Thunder Dragon & a Side-dish of India



TOUR LEADERS

Hilary and Peter Whitehead

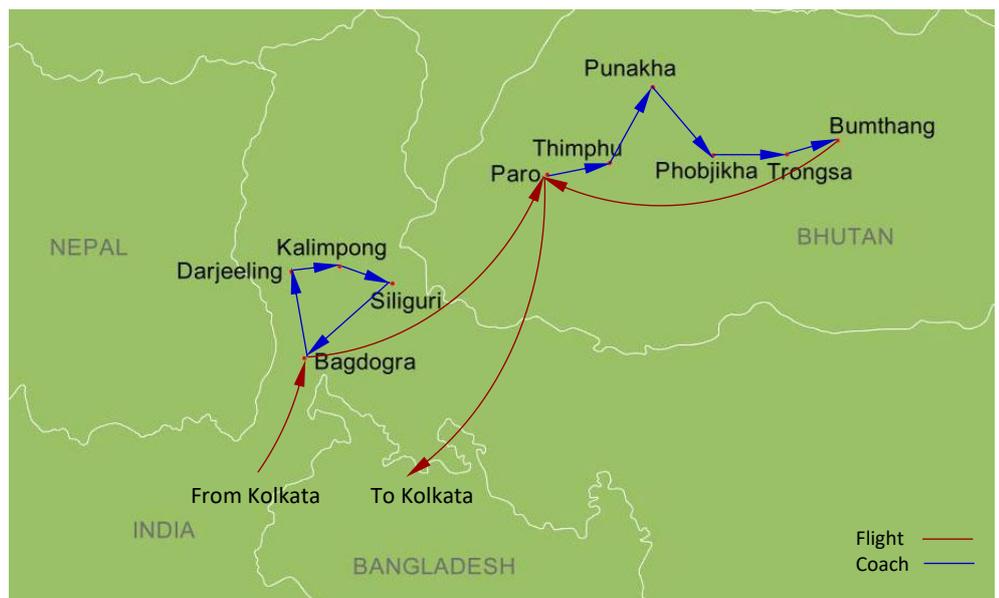
Since retiring from the demands of owning and operating a garden centre in Turramurra, Sydney for 23 years, Hilary and I now have some time on our hands to pursue our addiction for travel. But I haven't stopped loving plants and gardens and as a result I still work as a consultant to the Nursery & Garden Industry of NSW. Over the past 10 years we have taken tours to France, Vietnam, China, India and Bhutan with the latter being a real favourite destination of ours. We've also visited India many times, both independently and taking tours. The two of us enjoy showing like-minded travellers why we are passionate about these places – the history, landscape, culture, diversity and vibrancy of these and other countries.

Travel is an adventure and we can give you the opportunity to experience and enjoy other cultures and countries.

This Tour takes you to one of the most beautiful and most remote kingdoms in the world - Bhutan. Limited numbers of travellers each year can enjoy this magical country and its hospitable people who live by the mantra of Gross National Happiness. Before we take you to Bhutan, we will show you one of the most historic cities in India - Kolkata and the days of 'The Raj', followed by a trip up to Darjeeling for tea and trains!

Tour Highlights

- The Bhutanese people - smiles and friendliness
- Stunning, pristine Himalayan mountain scenery
- Phobjikha Valley - the winter home of the rare black necked crane
- Punakha Dzong - the Palace of Happiness
- Tigers Nest - Taktsang Monastery
- Understanding Gross National Happiness
- Tea Tasting in Darjeeling
- The Historic Himalayan Mountain Railway trip



Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, India

Day 1 Wed 04 Oct

Arrive in Kolkata

On arrival in Kolkata, meak your own way to your hotel.

Day 2 Thu 05 Oct

Kolkata

After an early breakfast at the hotel, there is no better time to walk through this vibrant and bustling city. As the city wakes up, we will witness the passage of humanity from the streets where her people live and work, to the great River Hooghly where they perform their early morning rituals to cleanse and purify themselves. Where better to witness this than in the colourful riverside flower market where all the city's religious flowers originate?

In our mind, it is important to start our journey here, as this is really where it all began. On the banks of this grand river, the battles of Europe were fought in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. Alongside Armenian and Portuguese churches, and Jewish synagogues, we embark upon a journey that started the British Raj in India, in and around Dalhousie Square, dating back to the time of the Black Hole, from where it transformed itself into a City of Palaces. The famous Writers' Building – the former HQ of the infamous East India Company, the magnificent Governor's House and the almost forgotten Charnock Mausoleum – Here lay the administrative, judicial and political heart of an Empire that stretched from Aden to Burma.

We break for a cup of tea and a snack during the walk.

At 10am: "**The Park Street Cemetery and Victoria Memorial**" - Two great institutions left behind by the British. The almost forgotten cemetery dates back a few centuries with poignant images of its early society; and the majestic Memorial that was embarked upon and completed just as the same conquerors abandoned their majestic capital to build another in Delhi. The Victoria Memorial houses a permanent collection of Art and a well laid out Calcutta Gallery telling the history of the city.

At 1pm: "**Lunch at Bomti's**" offers a rare glimpse of the old Calcutta way of life, now sadly endangered. Mr Surojit 'Bomti' lyenger, an art collector and socialite, is delighted to welcome visitors to his charming flat in perhaps the most interesting heritage building on historic Chowringhee. Authentic and

home-cooked Bengali cuisine served up with hot cups of fresh Darjeeling tea and stimulating insights into Bengali Art (with some for sale) and Modern Kolkata make up Bomti's salon.

At 4pm: **Boat cruise up the River Hoogly**. In a private river boat, guests are able to discover a hitherto unseen side of Kolkata, with a ring-side view of the myriad happenings on the river's 'Ghats'. This was the view that greeted many a 19C adventurer as he stepped up to the Princep's Ghat. You will sail past Belur Math, headquarters of The Ramakrishna Mission, as the city's two huge and famous bridges, Howrah and Vidyasagar Setu pass overhead. It is a wonderfully relaxing end to the day with a sumptuous tea menu comprising popular Indian snacks and refreshing Darjeeling Tea.

Later transfer back to our hotel.

Dinner and overnight in Kolkata.

(B, L, D)

Day 3 Fri 06 Oct

Kolkata-Bagdogra-Darjeeling

After breakfast, transfer to the airport to board your flight for Bagdogra.

On arrival Bagdogra we will drive to Darjeeling via **Kurseong**.

At a height of 1458m the land of the white orchid, 'Kurson-rip in lepcha', lies between Darjeeling and Siliguri. Scattered along a forested ridge, this tiny school town still hasn't been discovered extensively. There are several soothing walks like the walk to Nagri Spur, with its stunning views of the tea gardens and forests.

On arrival Darjeeling check into our hotel.

Standing high in the Himalayas at an altitude of 2134m, "Dorje Ling", or place of the Thunderbolt, offers breathtaking views of snow-capped mountain peaks, with the Kanchendzonga rising higher than all the others. Often referred to as the "Queen of the Hills", Darjeeling remains just as alluring with its tiny waterfalls, little villages and a narrow gauge railway track. Surrounded by World Famous Tea Gardens and snow-capped mountains, it still is one of the most exotic destinations. Graeme Westlake wrote in his book "An introduction to hill stations of India" refers to Darjeeling as having "A view Scarcely Unrivalled on Earth". Afternoon walk to **Observatory Hill**.

Overnight at our hotel in Darjeeling.

(B, L, D)



Victoria Memorial, Kolkata, India

Day 4 Sat 07 Oct

Darjeeling-Ghum-Darjeeling

The spectacular landscape unfolds as the 2-foot gauge **Darjeeling Himalayan Railway**, opened in 1881, labours at about 10 mph criss-crossing the main road. It has tiny 4-wheel locomotives (some over 100 years old) like living legends. One can experience the sound, smell and romance of a bygone era. DHR is a work of genius and technological achievement of 1881. It has social and cultural importance. It is beautiful and has outstanding universal appeal. Based on its unique features, it is considered to be of lasting significance to mankind and listed by UNESCO World Heritage.

Afternoon proceed for city tour.

The Himalayan Mountaineering Institute was started in Darjeeling after Tenzing Norgay climbed Everest, to train others in mountaineering and other adventure sports. In the Institute, one can see equipment used by Mr. Tenzing Norgay to conquer Mt Everest. Nearby, one can visit the **Himalayan Zoological Park** where mountain animals such as the Snow Leopard, Tibetan Wolf, Tibetan Yak, Himalayan Black Bear and several varieties of birds can be seen. **Tibetan Self-Help Centre or Refugee Centre** is run by Tibetan Refugees to preserve their handicrafts and we can see the making of Tibetan Carpets, Leather work, Paintings and Wooden work etc.

Evening enjoy **Tea Tasting at Nathmuls Tea Lounge**.

Overnight at our hotel in Darjeeling. (B, L, D)

Day 5 Sun 08 Oct

Darjeeling-Kalimpong

After breakfast drive to Kalimpong and on arrival check into our hotel.

At an altitude of 1250m, **Kalimpong's** location is ideal for a pleasant, relaxed getaway. Its clement weather has made Kalimpong's orchids and gladioli well renowned. Up to the early 1700s, the Kalimpong area was part of the Sikkim raja's domain. In the early 18th century, the Bhutan king also took power. In 1865, after the Anglo-Bhutan War, it was annexed to Darjeeling. Scottish Missionaries came here in the late 1800s. The town thrived as a wool trading centre with Tibet until the 1950s. Today it's a quiet hill resort and a haven for retired people.

Afternoon proceed for a city tour of Kalimpong.

Visit the **Flower Nurseries**. The climate of Kalimpong is ideal for the cultivation of flowers and plants. Kalimpong is famous for its nurseries which export exotic flowers like Amaryllis lilies, Anthuriums, Roses Gerberas, Dahlias, Gladioli as well as Orchids and Cacti.



Tea Plantation, India

Zang Dog Palri Fo-Brang Monastery is a fairly new monastery located in Durpin Dara and from here one can get an exclusive panoramic view of the town and surroundings. The prayer room inside the monastery is adorned with wall paintings and there is a rare three-dimensional mandala upstairs.

The Tharpa Choling Monastery at Tirpai Hill on the way to **Dr. Graham's Home** belongs to the Yellow Hat sect of Lamas to which the present Dalai Lama belongs.

Thongsa Gumpa Monastery is of Bhutanese origin and built around 1692. It is the oldest in Kalimpong. The original structure was destroyed in the inter-clan wars before the British arrived. Overnight at our hotel in Kalimpong. (B, L, D)

Day 6 Mon 09 Oct

Kalimpong-Siliguri

After breakfast drive to Siliguri en-route visit ISKCON and Salugara Monastery.

The **Siliguri** town centre is 5kms north of the main railway junction New Jalpaiguri. This crowded sprawling hub is the jumping off point for North Bengal and Sikkim. For most people Siliguri is an overnight transit point. There is a potter's village on the far side of Balason Bridge and a brightly coloured Tibetan Tashi Gomang Stupa 6kms east of Sevoke Road. Siliguri is also well known for its caneware.

Salugara Monastery is among the most frequented revered places, located in the outskirts of Siliguri. Located 6 km from the city, the Buddhist shrine is visited by tourists for meditation. The International Society for Krishna Consciousness, more popularly known as **ISKCON Temple**, is one of the prominent places of interest in Siliguri. Sited at Gital Para, ISKCON Temple Road, the temple is characterized by purity, serenity and sublime beauty. Also known as the Hare Krishna Movement, ISKCON temple in the city is the biggest Krishna centre in the whole of the Northeast India. Completely dedicated to Lord Krishna, the temple attracts thousands of devotees from all over the country.

Overnight at our hotel in Siliguri. (B, L, D)

Day 7 Tue 10 Oct

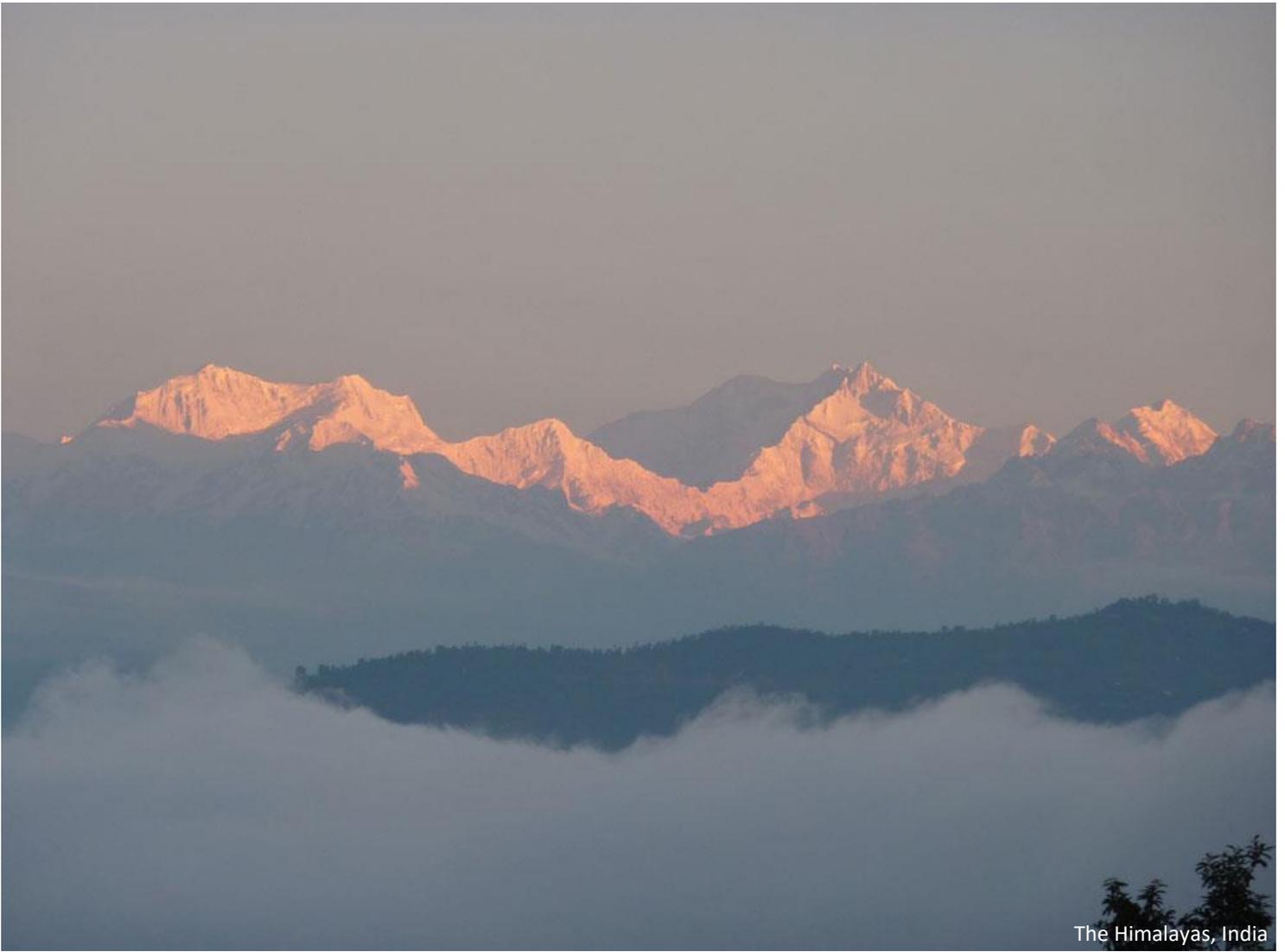
Siliguri-Bagdogra-Paro-Thimphu

After breakfast you will be transferred to Bagdogra Airport to board the flight for Paro. This flight into Bhutan is one of a kind giving you a taste of adventure, taking you as close as you can ever get to the Himalayan mountain ranges.

On arrival, you will be met by our Bhutanese guide and driver



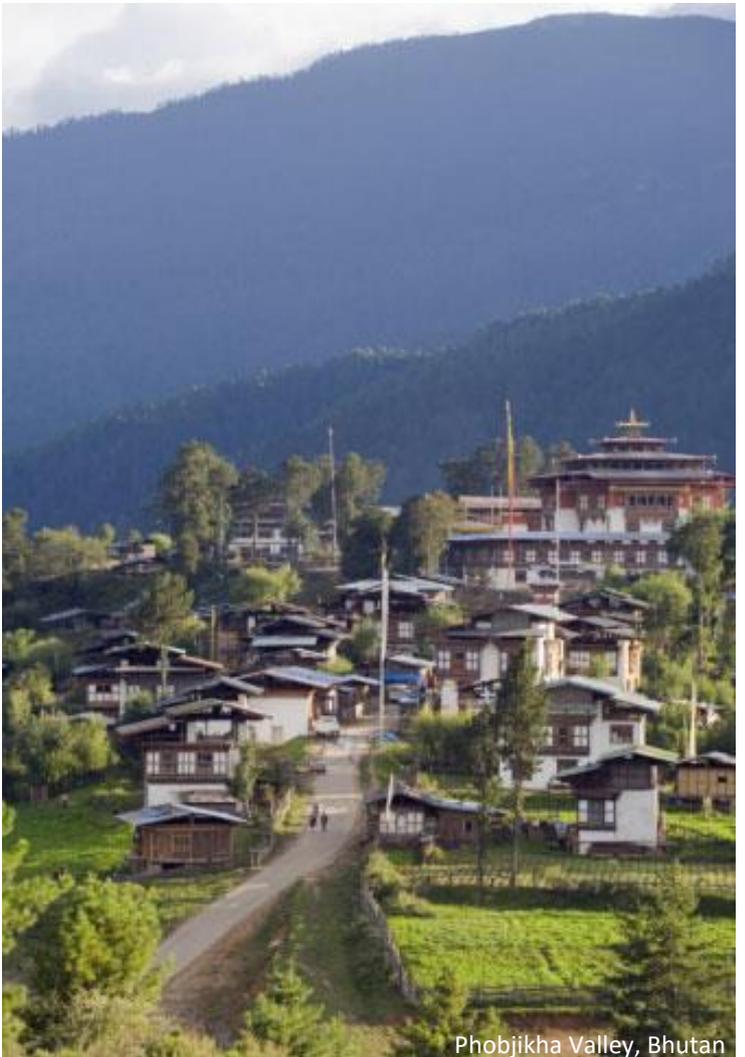
Salugara Monastery, Siliguri, India



The Himalayas, India



Monks in Thimphu, Bhutan



Phobjikha Valley, Bhutan

and we will head to Thimphu, the capital city of Bhutan. Have the late afternoon free to explore Thimphu town. **Dinner at hotel with a cultural show** and complimentary drinks. Overnight at our hotel in Thimphu. (B, L, D)

Day 8 Wed 11 Oct Thimphu

Today will be a relaxed day with sightseeing in Thimphu Valley. Start the day with a visit to the **Buddha point, National Memorial Chorten, Paper factory, Folk Heritage Museum** and **Traditional Arts and Craft School**.

After lunch at a local restaurant we go on to explore the arts and crafts bazaar and later visit the **Fortress Tashichodzong** also the seat of the King.

Later in the evening, **dinner with the Bhutanese family host at their home**.

Overnight at our hotel in Thimphu. (B, L, D)

Day 9 Thu 12 Oct Thimphu-Punakha

After breakfast, drive up to Dochu-la pass (3,088m) to get a view of the high Himalayan peaks towards the north east and depending on the weather you may or may not see the entire mountain range.

Stop for lunch at the local restaurant in Sopsokha village. After lunch we make our way to the **Temple of the Divine Madman** across the rice fields also known as the Temple of Fertility.

Continue on to Punakha Valley and check into our hotel.

Dinner at the hotel. Overnight at Punakha. (B, L, D)

Day 10 Fri 13 Oct Punakha-Phobjikha

In the morning we visit the **Punakha Dzong**, a massive structure built at the junction of two rivers. The Dzong has withstood damage from fire, earthquake and flood over the centuries.

In the afternoon we head to Phobjikha and on arrival check into the hotel and relax in the evening enjoying the view of the valley.

Dinner at the hotel. Overnight at Phobjikha. (B, L, D)

Day 11 Sat 14 Oct Phobjikha

The Phobjikha Valley is surely one of the loveliest high altitude glacial valleys in Bhutan. In the morning **explore the valley** and visit **Gangtey Gompa**, the only Nyingmapa monastery in western Bhutan. One can sight black necked cranes, if you are there at the right time of year.

Later in the day hike from one of the many **nature trails in the valley**, visiting farms and meeting locals.

Overnight at our hotel in Phobjikha. (B, L, D)

Day 12 Sun 15 Oct Phobjikha-Trongsa

We start out early today for our drive to Bumthang across Pele-la pass (3,300m) to Trongsa (80km) the traditional boundary between east and west. You will see a change in vegetation at this point, with mountain forest replaced by high altitude dwarf bamboo.

Overnight at our hotel in Trongsa. (B, L, D)

Day 13 Mon 16 Oct Trongsa-Bumthang

We will visit the **Trongsa Fort** before driving to Bumthang. From Trongsa, it is a journey of about 3 hours over the Yutong-la pass (3,400m/11,155ft) to Bumthang.

On arrival in Bumthang, check in to our lodge. (B, L, D)

Day 14 Tue 17 Oct Bumthang

Bumthang consists of four main valleys Ura, Chumey, Tang and Choekhor, Choekhor is the largest of the 4 mountain valleys and is widely considered as 'Bumthang Valley'. These fertile valleys are covered in fields of buckwheat, rice, potatoes, apple orchards and dairy farms are also common sights here. This serene region is one of the most peaceful places in the kingdom.

We visit **Kurje Lhakhang, Jambey Lhakhang** (7th century), **Tamshing Monastery** and **Jakar Dzong**.

The evening will be free to walk around the town and visit the local shops.

Overnight at Bumthang for another night. (B, L, D)

Day 15 Wed 18 Oct Bumthang-Paro

After early breakfast we take the domestic flight back to Paro allowing us ample time to explore **Paro valley**.

After lunch visit the **National Museum (Ta-Dzong)**. This was actually the Watch Tower of the Paro Rinchen Pong Dzong. It was converted into the National Museum in 1968. It is located on the top of a hill above the Paro Dzong overlooking Paro valley and the river.

Visit **Paro Rinchen Pong Dzong** (fortress) located in the Paro valley and approached by a gently sloping flagstone road and a beautiful covered wooden bridge and guard houses.



Chortens at the Dochu La Pass



Archery in Bhutan

Today, it is the Administrative seat of the Paro district and it also contains a state monastic community of about 200 monks. The central tower (Utse) of the Dzong is one of the most beautiful in Bhutan with its superb woodwork. It was built in 1645 A.D.

Overnight at our hotel in Paro. (B, L, D)

Day 16 Thu 19 Oct

Paro

Hike to **Taksang (Tiger's Nest)** stopping for lunch at the cafeteria.

After lunch, we drive up the valley to **Drukgyel Dzong**, built in 1647 by the Shabdrung to commemorate the Bhutanese victory over the Tibetans in the war of 1644.

On our return we visit **Kyichu Lhakhang**, built in the 7th century by the Tibetan king, Songtsen Gampo and explore **Paro town**.

Overnight at our hotel in Paro. (B, L, D)

Day 17 Fri 20 Oct

Paro-Kolkata

After an early breakfast in the hotel, drive to the airport for the flight to Kolkata, Upon arrival in Kolkata, you will be transferred to your hotel.

The coach will be at our disposal for shopping or sightseeing.

Overnight at our hotel in Kolkata. (B, L, D)

Day 18 Sat 21 Oct

Depart Kolkata

After breakfast, make your own way to the International Airport to board your overnight flight home. (B)

The Tour Fitness: Moderate level of fitness is necessary for Bhutan as much of the tour is at altitude. (Effects of this can easily be controlled with medication.) The climb up to Tigers Nest is not for the faint hearted - however an alternative activity will be arranged for those not undertaking the climb.

Tour price (Land Only)

Per person twin share: \$8,670

Single room supplement: \$1,410

**Land only tour starts and finishes in Kolkata*

Tour price includes

- Intra region flights Kolkata-Bagdogra-Paro// Bumthang-Paro-Kolkata, taxes and surcharges included
- Arrival/departure group transfers
- 17 nights twin-share accommodation with breakfast daily
- Toy train Darjeeling-Ghum-Darjeeling
- Meals as stated in the itinerary
- Private coach with English speaking guides during the tour
- Entrance fees as stated in the itinerary
- Visa fees for India and Bhutan
- Gratuities to guides and drivers

Tour price does not include

- Travel insurance
- Personal expenses
- Anything not mentioned above

Hotels

Kolkata – Oberoi Grand Hotel

Darjeeling – Hotel Elgin

Kalimpong – Hotel Silver Oaks

Siliguri – Royal Orchid Hotel

Thimpu – Hotel Namgay Heritage

Punakha – Zhingkhram Resort

Phobjikha – Hotel Dewachen

Trongsa – Yangkhil Resort

Bumthang – Jakar Village Lodge

Paro – Tashi Namgay Resort



Paro Valley, Bhutan

Tour Name: The Land of The Thunder Dragon

04 - 22 October 2017

First Passenger

Title: Surname (as shown in passport):

First Name (as shown in passport): Preferred First Name:

Gender: MALE / FEMALE If sharing what would be your room preference? TWIN / DOUBLE

Single supplement? YES / NO Do you require us to organise twin-share on your behalf? YES / NO

Are you a smoker? YES / NO (Please note that Single Supplement will be payable if we are unable to arrange twin-share for you)

Do you hold an Australian passport? YES / NO If No, please state the nationality:

Passport Number: Date of issue: / / Date of expiry: / /

Date of birth: / / Place of issue: Occupation:

(Passport details are required for all tours travelling outside Australia)

Second Passenger

Title: Surname (as shown in passport):

First Name (as shown in passport): Preferred First Name:

Sex: MALE / FEMALE If sharing what would be your room preference? TWIN / DOUBLE

Single supplement? YES / NO Do you require us to organise twin-share on your behalf? YES / NO

Are you a smoker? YES / NO (Please note that Single Supplement will be payable if we are unable to arrange twin-share for you)

Do you hold an Australian passport? YES / NO If No, please state the nationality:

Passport Number: Date of issue: / / Date of expiry: / /

Date of birth: / / Place of issue: Occupation:

(Passport details are required for all tours travelling outside Australia)

Passenger/s Contact Details

Street Address:

Suburb: State: Postcode:

Postal Address: State: Postcode:

Home Tel: Work Tel: Fax:

Mobile No: E-mail:

Additional Travel

If you require assistance with any add on travel arrangements pre or post tour, such as accommodation, or tours, please either attach relevant details or contact Opulent Journeys.

Travel Insurance

It is in your best interest and compulsory with our office for you to have adequate travel insurance for your trip to cover you for any unforeseen circumstances that may arise before or during the trip. If you would like a quote or further information regarding travel insurance for your trip, please contact our office and we will forward the relevant information to you.

Emergency Contact (Person to contact should there be an emergency while you are overseas)

Complete Name: Relationship:

Street Address:

Suburb: State: Postcode:

Home Tel: Work Tel: Mobile No:

Payment options:

1) Cheque/Money - Enclosed is a cheque / money order made payable to **Opulent Journeys**, which acts as a deposit for the tour.

2) Credit Card- Visa / MasterCard / American Express

Please call our office with your credit card details -1300 219 885 or complete the information below.

Card No: Expiry Date: /

Cardholder's name:

Card Holders Signature: Date: / /

**(Please note that payments by credit card will be subject to a Merchant Administration Fee as follows:
1.5% for Visa / MasterCard, 3.3% for American Express)**

3) Direct Deposit into the Opulent Journeys bank Account.

Bank: Westpac Account Name: Opulent Journeys
Bank BSB: 032 000 Account Number: 902713

Please list the payment description as per the following for Direct Deposits:

Reference: Your surname. This will assist our office in locating your payment when we receive your completed booking form.

DEPOSIT AND FINAL PAYMENT

The deposit of \$400.00 per person is accepted as a first instalment of the tour cost and will be used to secure your place on the tour. It will be fully refunded if the arrangements cannot be confirmed or the tour is cancelled. A detailed invoice is sent out to all passengers booked on the tour, approximately two weeks prior to due date of the final payment. Final payment for the tour needs to be received 60 days prior to tour departure.

CANCELLATION AND REFUNDS

If it is necessary to cancel your booking, cancellations must be received in writing and the following scale of cancellation charges will be applied, per person.

Days of notice prior to departure:	Cancellation Charge
Over 60 days	\$250.00 – Administration Fee
59-30 days	25% of the tour cost
29-11 days	50% of the tour cost
10 days or less	100% of the tour cost

No refund is available for cancellation after commencement of tour or for any service not used.

FORCED CANCELLATION

In the event that, due to failure to reach a minimum number of tour participants (excluding the tour leader), it is necessary to cancel the tour, you will receive a full refund of your deposit. If it is necessary to cancel the tour, we will advise you not less than 60 days prior to the tour departure.

PASSPORT AND VISAS

It is the traveller's responsibility to ensure that they possess the necessary travel documentation for the tour, such as a valid passport and any required visas. In general a passport should be valid at least 6 months beyond the end of your journey and have two clear pages for each country to be visited to allow for entry and exit stamps en-route or for any visas applicable for countries in your journey. At the time of making your booking you will be given information about any visas that may be required for the tour.

PRICES

Tour prices stated on the flyer have been calculated on the basis of exchange rates and tariffs valid at time of print and are subject to change up until the date of departure. Should you decide to cancel your tour on the basis of a change of price, then normal cancellation charges will apply.

OPULENT JOURNEYS

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I have read and understand the Responsibility section and Booking Conditions as set out on this page of this form and accept them on behalf of myself and my party. I declare that I/they are not travelling against any medical advice.

Signature:



Taktsang (Tiger's Nest), Paro, Bhutan



For further information please contact Opulent Journeys:

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Email: enquiries@opulentjourneys.com.au

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