

Self-Compassion Journey
with
Kristy Arbon & Samsara Asia, Bhutan

SACRED JOURNEY AT A GLANCE

- ❖ *Get a glimpse of the living culture of Bhutan through a tsechu festival (trip is tailored to coincide with Paro Tsechu)*
- ❖ *Experience Bhutan's wilderness and rustic lifestyles on a drive through its picturesque villages.*
 - ❖ *Take a hike up to the Tiger's Nest and relax in the sanctity of its blessings.*
- ❖ *Soak and cleanse physically and emotionally in a therapeutic hot stone bath while you dine with a local family in a rustic farmhouse.*

16TH OCTOBER (TUESDAY) : ARRIVAL AND TRANSFER TO THIMPHU (2200MASL)

Arrival in Bhutan is an experience by itself as you fly past eight of the ten highest mountains in the world including Mount Everest and Bhutan's very own Chomolhari. Samsara Asia team will welcome you at the Paro International Airport and transfer to Thimphu.

Highlights: Visit the (i) National Memorial Chorten, (ii) the National Textile Museum, (iii) Folk Heritage Museum, (iv) evening drive to Sangaygang and visit to Overnight: Namgay Heritage Hotel (<http://www.nhh.bt/site/>)

Mindful Self-Compassion Topics: Discovering Our Group

17TH OCTOBER (WEDNESDAY) : SACRED THIMPHU VALLEY

Thimphu is the capital city of Bhutan with approximately 0.1 million people and is famed for being the only city without a single traffic light. With one foot in modernity and another gripping its ancient ways of life, exploring Thimphu gives a glimpse of Bhutan at the cusp of the East and the West.

Highlights: (i) Hike to Cheri Buddhist Meditation Center. Sit in stillness for an hour with a master monk. (ii) Visit the Tango University where monks learn the art and philosophy of Buddhism. (iii) In the evening, take a stroll along the largest sitting Buddha in the world, the Buddha Dordenma physically overlooking the Thimphu valley.

Halt: Overnight: Namgay Heritage Hotel

Mindful Self-Compassion Topics: Practicing Mindfulness

18TH OCTOBER (WEDNESDAY) : THIMPHU TO PUNAKHA (1,300MASL)

Punakha valley is the ancient capital of Bhutan and the seat of the first secular and religious head of Bhutan, the Zhabdrung. It now serves as the winter residence of the religious head of the state, the Je Khenpo.

Highlights: (i) A very dramatic drive over the mountain pass of Dochu La (3050 masl) with its 108 Druk Wangyal Chortens (stupa) and meditation caves. Weather permitting, the view of the Himalayan ranges is spectacular from this point of view. (ii) Visit Chime Lhakhang, the temple in honour of the Divine Mad Man, Drukpa Kuenley and legends of the phallus that blesses. (iii) An evening stroll along the banks of the Phochu (male river) to get a glimpse of the rare White-bellied Heron, a majestic bird on the brink of extinction.

Halt: Dhumra Boutique, Punakha

Mindful Self-Compassion Topics: Discovering Self-Compassion

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19TH OCTOBER (THURSDAY) : PUNAKHA VALLEY

Highlights: (i) Visit the **village of Talo**, home of the Queen Mother of Bhutan a heritage village that still holds Bhutan's rustic authenticity. (ii) Take a short hike through charming rice fields dotted with prayer flags to the **Khamsum Yuelley Namgyal**, a stunning monument overlooking the valley. (iii) Visit the very sacred and monumental **Punakha Dzong**, home to the remains of Bhutan's first ruler, **Shabdrung Nawang Namgyal**, and the winter residence of the monastic order.

Halt: Dhumra Boutique, Punakha

Mindful Self-Compassion Topics: Practicing Loving-Kindness

20TH OCTOBER (FRIDAY) : PUNAKHA TO PHOBJIKHA

Highlights: (i) Drive toward Pelela Pass and onto Phobjikha through old growth rhododendron and oak forests; (ii) Visit the **Gangtey monastery** and hike down toward the valley of the **Black-necked Cranes to meet George the Crane**. (iii) Visit the ancient **Khewang Lhakhang**. (iv) Learn about environmental conservation challenges and successes at the **Crane Information Centre**. (v) Interact with locals with a folk dance and dinner at a quaint farmhouse.

Halt: Om's Farmhouse

Mindful Self-Compassion Topics: Discovering Your Compassionate Voice

21ST OCTOBER (SATURDAY) : PHOBJIKHA TO PARO (2280 MASL)

Highlights: (i) Retrace the journey back to **Dochu La** and hike through to **Trashigang Goenba** for a lunch with the monks in residence (ii) Follow the **Wang Chu and Pa Chu** (rivers) to Paro valley. (iii) Enroute, visit the iron bridge and **Tamchoe Lhakhang** before crossing through to **Tshongdue (Paro Township)**.

Halt: Janka Resort, Paro

Mindful Self-Compassion Topics: Living Deeply

22ND OCTOBER (SUNDAY) : THE SACRED PARO VALLEY

Paro is the rice bowl of Bhutan with a farming community that stretches throughout the valley. Every year, the oldest **thongdrol** (that which liberates on sight) is unfurled in the *Highlights:* (i) Early morning visit to **Dyenkha** to witness the giant **thongdrol** with thousands of locals and devotees dressed in their finest. (ii) Visit the **National Museum**, housed in the **Tadzong** (a watchtower) to observe a large collection of artifacts providing an introduction to the rich culture and heritage of Bhutan. (iii) A short walk down the hill is **Paro Rinpung Dzong**, with its architectural splendour and **Neymey Zam** as we walk the ancient path toward **Tshongdue**. (iv) Visit the 8th Century **Kyichu Lhakhang** and dine in a farmhouse.

Halt: Janka Resort, Paro

Mindful Self-Compassion Topics: Meeting Difficult Emotions

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23RD OCTOBER (MONDAY): BUMDRA WILDERNESS TREK (4000MASL)

*Highlights: (i) Drive up to **Sangchhoekhor (2,800m/9186ft)**, a Buddhist institute for a tshog offering (merit accumulation) at the sacred temple of the historical **Zhabdrung** where we will interact with university students. (ii) Hike to **Rimphu Goenba and Choetsotse** (retreat mountain) and then on to Bumdra (3,800m/12,467ft). The hike will take approximately 2 to 3 hours depending on the pace). (iii) Afternoon excursions around the campsite in search of the beautiful monal pheasants and wild flowers of the Himalayas. (iv) Bonfire dinner at the **Bumdra Wilderness Campsite** in the meadows filled with yaks and wild flowers.*

Halt: Bumdra Camp

Mindful Self-Compassion Topics: Exploring Challenging Relationships

24TH OCTOBER (TUESDAY) : TAKTSANG TIGER'S NEST HIKE (3120 MASL)

*Overlooking the picturesque Paro valley and perched high on a cliff is Bhutan's iconic landmark, the **Taktsang** or the **Tiger's Nest**. First built in 1692 at the site of a meditation cave, legend has it that Guru Rinpoche (the lotus born) flew on the back of a tigress and meditated in the same cave to subdue a demon-ess.*

*Highlights: (i) After breakfast at the camp, hike down to the famous and legendary **Tiger's Nest Temple Complex** (1 hour hike downhill). A steep descent toward **Shekar Chu** (waterfall) and a slight climb takes us to the gates of the temple complex. (ii) Retrace our steps back to the waterfall and make a final descent down to **Ramthankha** (45 minutes to 1 hours). (iii) Drive further up the valley to **Drugkyal Dzong** (built in 1644 to stop Tibetan troops invading Bhutan). (iii) Visit the unusual **Dungtse Lhakhang** and stroll through Paro town browsing the many handicraft souvenir boutiques.*

Halt: Janka Resort, Paro

Mindful Self-Compassion Topics: Embracing Your Life

25TH OCTOBER (WEDNESDAY): PARO VALLEY EXCURSION AND RELAX

Wrap up and reflection.

26TH OCTOBER (THURSDAY) : HOMEBOUND

Transfer to the airport and depart for home.

Tour Details

Tour Duration: 10 nights-11 days

Group Size: Min=5 Max=15

Tour Package Cost: USD\$2,950 per person

Included in Cost of Trip:

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- ❖ *Twin sharing accommodation (single supplements are available for extra cost) in a minimum 3 star hotel*
- ❖ *Three daily meals (B,L,D)*
- ❖ *Visa management and visa fee*
- ❖ *Airport transfers*
- ❖ *Comfortable tour vehicle*
- ❖ *Daily mandatory **Royalty of \$ 65per person** due to government of Bhutan*
- ❖ *Guided tour with a licensed, English-speaking tour guide*
- ❖ *All entry fees for the above sights and additional activities as listed on the itinerary*
- ❖ *Bottled water*
- ❖ *Full service and assistance before, during and after the trip*
- ❖ *All hiking and trekking haulage (porter, pony, camping gear, etc.)*

Not Included in Cost of Trip:

- ❖ *International and domestic flights (can be arranged by us on request)*
- ❖ *Alcoholic beverages*
- ❖ *Gratuities/tips (for your Bhutanese guide/driver – all other gratuities are covered)*
- ❖ *Items of personal nature (phone calls, souvenirs, spa services, etc)*
- ❖ *Travel Insurance*