

# Bhutan and Northeast India

## Happiness ♦ Tradition ♦ Tribal Cultures

Northeast India: February 8–18, 2018

Bhutan: Feb 18–28, 2018

*“Nothing is bigger than necessary. Every sign of human settlement repeats the mantra of contentment:  
‘This is just enough.’” – Jamie Zeppa*



## *Bhutan – “Land of The Thunder Dragon”*

- Gross Happiness Index instead of GDP
- World’s only net carbon emitter
- No traffic lights, only white-gloved traffic cops
- 108,000 trees commemorated birth of prince in 2016
- Progressive, yet rooted in tradition; stunningly beautiful

Such a place does exist.

## *India’s “Wild East”- untouched and astonishing*

- Possibly Asia’s last natural and anthropological sanctuary
- Collision zone of tribal cultures
- One-horned rhinos . . . population on the rise!
- Juxtaposed with manicured plantations of finest tea and 700 year old monasteries dedicated to ancient art forms

22 days of superlatives

### 11 days (10 nights) Northeast India

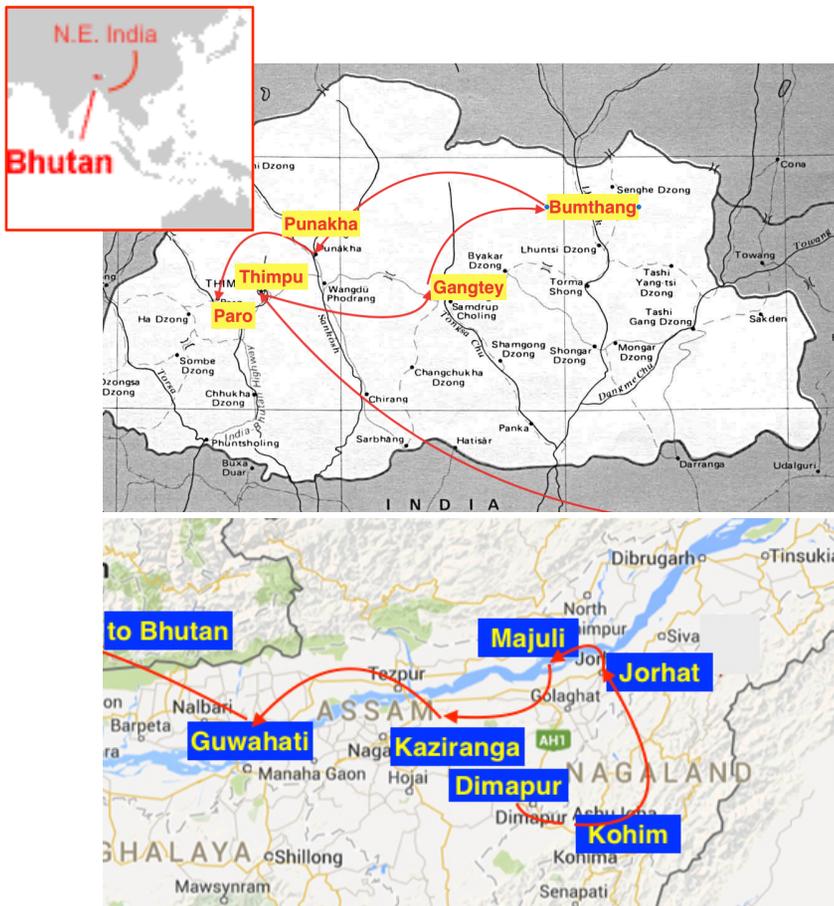
- 1 night Kohima
- 2 nights Khonoma
- 1 night Dimapur
- 1 night Jorhat
- 1 night Majuli
- 2 nights Kaziranga
- 2 nights Guwahati

### 11 days (10 nights) Bhutan

- 2 nights Thimphu
- 2 nights Gangtey
- 2 nights Bumthang
- 2 nights Punakha
- 2 nights Paro

Note: International flights not included





## Your destination awaits

Under the glacial spill of mighty **Brahmaputra River**  
 Explore the untouched edge of India's "**Wild East**"  
 Elephant safari to rhinos in **Kaziranga's** swampy grasslands  
 Lord/lady it at a **Jorhat** tea planter's mansion  
 Visit **Khonoma's** tribal villages on mountain passes where  
 former head-hunters of **Nagaland** slowly embrace modernity



In **Bhutan**, explore a culture that revolves around the sacred  
 Watch spinning prayer wheels at breathtaking **Dochula Pass**  
 Descend into a flower-bedecked valley in **Pjobjhika**  
 Visit glorious monasteries of **Gangtey, Trongsa** and **Bumthang**  
 where hundreds of monks live out their reverence  
 Don traditional costume and join the **Panukha Tzechu** festival  
 Glimpse deities said to inhabit beautiful **Mount Chomolhari**  
 Conquer a cliff face and catch your breath at  
**Tiger's Nest Monastery**

"What I love about this itinerary . . .

I thought I'd seen it all -- until I ventured into India's "Wild East" last year. Garlanding the subcontinent's furthest reaches, and hidden from the world by imposing mountain ranges, this spectacular region was closed to travelers until recently. Only coming to light are its indigenous cultures, wildlife sanctuaries, exquisite silks, and island monasteries caught in the time-warped straits of the mighty Brahmaputra. I'd like to share with you the fresh wonder of North East India, along with a place that is like no other: Bhutan. Join me on a raw adventure for the first half, and be left incredulous in the second half . . . truly the last Shangri La!"

~Shila





Day 1: Thu Feb 8

### Dimapur - Kohima

From your international arrival in Delhi or Kolkata, fly to Dimapur, the last outpost before ascending the “hill-country” of Nagaland.

In Dimapur, meet your tour leader and drive 2.5 hours to Kohima, the capital of Nagaland.

Nagaland is a land of folklore passed down the generations through word of mouth. Sixteen distinct tribal groups each with its own language, costume, and traditions, enrich this remote state.

In the evening, meet the group over a hosted dinner.

Meals: D



Day 2: Fri Feb 9

### Khonoma Village

In the morning, visit the WWII Cemetery in the heart of Kohima town, where one of the fiercest battles of WWII was fought for a strategic Naga mountain pass deemed crucial by both the Japanese and the British.

After lunch, transfer 1.5 hrs to Khonoma Village nestled in Dzukou Valley with beautiful vistas of forests and terraced paddy fields. Khonoma is a eco-friendly “green” village, and seat of the Angami tribe, renowned for their bravery and martial skills.

Take in a backstrap weaving demonstration at a local home.

Overnight at a local guesthouse.

Meals: B,L,D



Day 3: Sat Feb 10

### Khonoma Village

In the morning, explore Khonoma village at your leisure. Walk cobblestoned paths through the village and be welcomed with smiles. Observe daily life in this gentle village, and soak in the panorama.

In the afternoon, join in traditional dance and games. Visit a local home. Houses are built with natural materials and cooking is done on fires. Succumb to the call of the highlands and trek to a neighbouring village (moderate to strenuous – optional)

Evening, enjoy a typical Naga meal with a local family. Overnight at local guesthouse.

Meals: B, L, D



Day 4: Sunday Feb 11

### Khonoma - Dimapur

Wake up with Angami church-goers going to Sunday worship. The village is built into the hillside with newly arrived church co-existing with animist faiths. Attend a service (optional) for a peek at the diverse congregation.

After an early lunch, drive 3 hours back to Dimapur.

En route, stop at the Kachari ruins, an intriguing relic of mushroom-shaped pillars. The ruins, some intact and others crumbling, are rumoured to have been used for a game similar to large-scale chess. They were built by the Kachari kingdom before invasion by the Ahom of Assam in 13<sup>th</sup> C.

Upon arrival in Dimapur, check in and stroll the local market before dinner and overnight.

Meals: B, L, D



Day 5: Mon Feb 12

### Jorhat

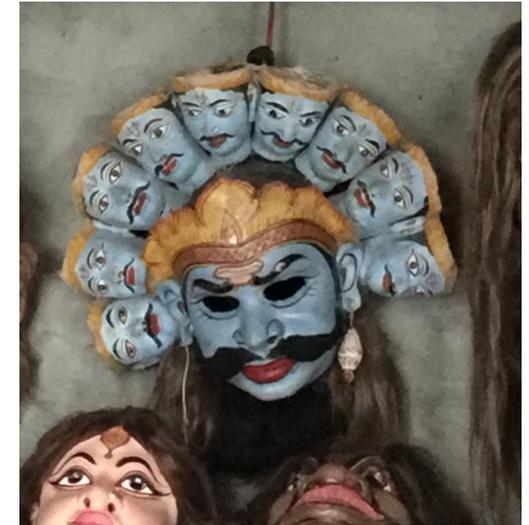
After breakfast, drive 4 hours to Jorhat.

Check in at a former tea-plantation now a hotel with a golf course. The plantation belongs to the first Assamese family to break into the stranglehold of British-controlled tea business.

You are invited to walk amidst 44 acres of finest Assamese tea gardens and try your hand at picking tea. Or play a round of golf at the challenging 18 hole par 71 course (\$)

Experience the peaceful life of a tea plantation with staff at your beck and call.

Meals: B, L, D



Day 6: Tue Feb 13

### Jorhat - Majuli Island

After breakfast, drive 2 hours to meet a local ferry to Majuli Island. (Ferry journey: 2 hours). With all manner of goods being carted, the ferry journey itself is a highlight. You may even be invited to drop in at a card game on top deck!

Majuli, the world's largest inhabited riverine island, is a step back in time. An enclave of the "Bhakti" movement to humanise Hinduism, Majuli is known for its monasteries that excel in dance dramas celebrating the life of Krishna.

Take in a drama in a 16<sup>th</sup> century monastery and learn how the intricate handmade masks are made. Dinner and overnight in a lovely bamboo community-run cottage initiative.

Meals: B, L, D



Day 7: Wed Feb 14

### Majuli Island - Kaziranga

In the morning, journey 2 hrs by ferry back to the mainland and drive additional 2 hours amidst rolling tea plantations to Kaziranga National Park, a UNESCO world heritage site and famous for its one horned rhino.

On arrival, check in at the lodge.

Afternoon workshop on textile dyeing at Iora using the abundant plants and flowers that grow on resort grounds. You will learn about making natural dyes, and dye a raw silk stole. Learn about a community initiative to teach local women how to weave eri and muga silk for income supplementation.

Optional: golf at 18 hole course nearby (\$)

Dinner at resort and overnight.

Meals: B, L, D



Day 8: Thu Feb 15

### Kaziranga

Get up early in the morning for an exciting elephant safari through Kaziranga to appreciate the beauty of famous one-horned rhino up close. Kaziranga is recognized as a world biodiversity hotspot. A success story, population of the one horned rhino is on the increase due to conservation efforts.

After a late breakfast, visit a nearby village to see the lifestyle and culture of local Mishing tribe. Afternoon, go on a Jeep safari inside Western range of the National Park for a chance to spot the ultimate: a tiger. This range has maximum short grass areas and is the optimum habitat for elephant, rhino and water buffalo. Evening: traditional Assamese dinner.

Meals: B, L, D



Day 9: Fri Feb 16

### Kaziranga - Guwahati

Today is a travel day. Drive 6 hours to Guwahati with a lunch stop on the way.

Upon arrival in Guwahati, check in at our hotel.

Guwahati is the largest city in Assam, yet it retains a small town feel. The centre is quite walkable.

Late afternoon at leisure to explore a local market. As the sun sets, enjoy an evening cruise down the mighty Brahmaputra. (Subject to weather conditions.)

Dinner and overnight.

Meals B, L, D



Day 10: Sat Feb 17

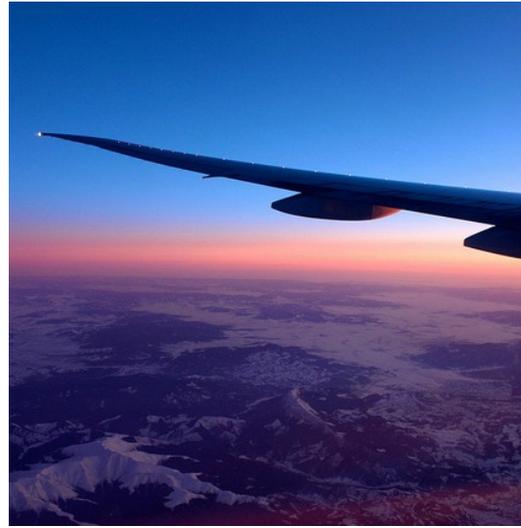
### Guwahati - Sualkuchi -

Morning, join worshippers at the ancient Kamakhya Temple to fertility, where the Mother Goddess is venerated by the colour red, and daily animal sacrifices are a throwback to pre-Bhakti movement Hinduism. Walk the fascinating temple bazaar where you can spot holy beads called “Rudrashk” selling for hundreds of thousands of rupees.

After lunch, drive 1 hour to Sualkuchi village, also called the Manchester of the East, and famous for Muga, the beautiful silk of Assam. Muga is regarded as most precious of silks due to its long fibres. It does not take dyes readily and is always a warm champagne colour. See how the famous Assamese silk *mekhela sadars* (Assamese saree) are woven.

Dinner and overnight in Guwahati.

Meals: B, L, D



Day 11: Sun Feb 18

### Guwahati - Departure

Transfer to airport for your onward flight.

Perhaps you will be joining us in Bhutan? Flight Guwahati – Paro

Dep 8.45 Arr 10.10

Or onward for your international connection.

Thank you for travelling with E.Y.H.O. Tours!

Meals: B



Day 1: Sun Feb 18

## Thimphu

Arrive Paro. **If arriving independently i.e. not with N.E India tour, please arrange to arrive by 11 am.**  
Drive Paro – Thimphu (2 hours).

The capital town of Bhutan and the centre of government, religion and commerce, Thimphu is a unique city with unusual mixture of modern development alongside ancient traditions. With the population of about 90,000 it is perhaps still the world's only capital city without a traffic light.

Evening, enjoy an exploratory walk around Thimphu Main Street and market area. Also visit a local craft bazaar to browse through example of Bhutan's fine traditional arts. Here you can buy hand-woven textiles, Thangka paintings, masks, ceramics, slate and wood carvings, and more.

Meals: B, L, D



Day 2: Mon Feb 19

## Thimphu

Take the morning to sightsee Thimphu, including the National Library and the highly recommended Textile Museum.

After lunch visit Buddha Point, for stunning views from alongside the giant statue. Then, visit King's Memorial Chorten, continuously circumambulated by people, murmuring mantras and spinning their prayer wheels. Visit Choki Traditional Art School, a govt. initiative where students from various backgrounds are admitted to for a duration of 1-6 years learning traditional art forms like painting, wood carving, sculpture making, embroidery.

Dinner and overnight in Thimphu

Meals: B, L, D



Day 3: Tue Feb 20

## Thimphu - Gangtey

Drive 6 hours Thimphu – Gangtey via the Dochula Pass. In Bhutan, the passes are marked by a large Bhutanese Chorten and prayer flag.

The Dochula pass offers the most spectacular view over the high peaks of the eastern Himalayas on a clear day. The journey continues over the mountain pass where on a clear day, the towering Himalayan peaks are clearly visible. The highway follows the scenic Dang Chhu before climbing through forests of bamboo and oak.

Arrive Gangtey. In evening, rest or explore the beautiful Gangtey valley at your leisure.

Meals: B, L, D



Day 4: Wed Feb 21

### Gangtey

Begin the day with a visit to Gangtey Goempa, the biggest Nyingmapa monastery in Bhutan.

Then, explore the Phobjikha valley. A few kilometers beyond the Gangtey Monastery lies the village of Phobjikha. A classic textbook glacial valley, also known as the Valley of the Black Cranes, this quiet and remote location is the winter home of black-necked cranes, which migrate from the arid plains of Tibet in the north, to pass the winter months in a milder climate. Pay a visit to the black-necked crane information centre to learn more. Use the centre's powerful spotting scopes to spot the beautiful birds.

Return to Gangtey and overnight.

Meals: B, L, D



Day 5: Thu Feb 22

### Gangtey - Bumthang

After breakfast begin the 7 hour drive to Bumthang via Trongsa. Stop enroute at Chendbji Chorten, patterned on Kathmandu's Swayambhunath Stupa, with eyes painted at four cardinal points.

After lunch at Trongsa visit Trongsa Dzong. Built in 1648 it was the seat of power over central and eastern Bhutan. Also visit Ta Dzong, recently opened fort in Trongsa. The Ta Dzong, a cylindrical stone structure rising five stories, was built in 1652 by Chogyal Minjur Tempa. After more than 350 years, it has been resurrected into a museum, that represents a tasteful blend of tradition and modernity.

Meals: B, L, D



Day 6: Fri Feb 23

### Bumthang

Bumthang is the general name given to combination of four valleys – Chumey, Choekhor, Tang and Ura, with altitudes varying from 2,600m to 4,000m. It is home to many prominent Buddhist temples and monasteries. Visit a few of the most notable and beautiful throughout the day.

The monastery is part of an effort to preserve and revitalize Bhutanese culture. The monk's regular curriculum is reading, memorizing the daily prayers, learning dharma dances, drawing mandalas, learning the melodies of sacred rituals, the use of ceremonial instruments and the art of making sacrificial objects, along with the basics of contemplation.

Dinner and overnight in Bumthang

Meals: B, L, D



Day 7: Sat Feb 24

### Bumthang - Punakha

After breakfast, drive 8 hours to Punakha, the old capital town of Bhutan.

One of the most picturesque drives, cutting past charming hamlets, serene farmlands, hours and hours of deep forests and valleys, hills filled with rhododendrons of every hue, the drive to Bumthang is long but you wouldn't want it to end. Lunch stop and onward to Punakha.

Upon arrival, enjoy your evening at leisure. Punakha's religious festival will be just beginning, so there will be plenty to take in. Locals will gather in a spirit of festivity, celebration and deep faith to witness unique masked dances and celebrations tomorrow.

Meals: B, L, D



Day 8: Sun Feb 25

### Punakha

Enjoy a morning walk through fields and paddies to Chimi Lhakhang, the fertility temple.

After lunch; proceed to witness the Punakha Tshechu at Punakha Dzong. The Punakha Tshechu, as all Tshechu festivals, marks the heroic deeds of Guru Padma Sambhawa, also known as Guru Rimpoche, the precious saint who introduced Tantric Buddhism throughout the Himalayas. Monks and laymen dressed in colourful brocades and ferocious masks perform tantric dances with chants of Buddhist scripts. The culmination of festival is the unfolding of a huge cloth *thangka*, a sacred scroll, depicting Padma Smabhava and imagery from Buddhist pantheon.

Meals: B, L, D



Day 9: Mon Feb 26

### Punakha - Paro

Drive 5 hours to Paro. Enroute, visit Simtokha Dzong, the oldest fortress in the country and current home to the School for Buddhist Studies.

Upon arrival in Paro, visit National Museum and "fortress of jewels." Along the wooden galleries lining the inner courtyard are fine wall paintings illustrating Buddhist lore such as four friends, the old man of long life, the wheel of life, scenes from the life of Milarepa, Mount Sumeru and other cosmic Mandala.

Evening to explore Paro at your own leisure.

Dinner and overnight in Paro.

Meals: B, L, D



Day 10: Tue, Feb 27

### Paro

After breakfast, walk 5 hours to the Taktsang Monastery or "Tiger's Nest", one of the most famous of Bhutan's monasteries, perched on the side of a cliff 900m above the Paro valley floor. It is said that Guru Rinpoche arrived here on the back of a tigress and meditated at this monastery and hence it is called "Tiger's Nest". (Horse transport available partway for those who wish to save their legs) Take in this beautiful monastery and spectacular views before descending.

Late afternoon, drive to Drukgyel Dzong, a ruined fortress where Bhutanese warriors fought Tibetan invaders centuries ago. The snowy dome of sacred Chomolhari, "mountain of goddess" can be seen in all her glory from the approach road to the Dzong.

Group farewell dinner.

Meals: B, L, D



Day 11: Wed Feb 28

### Paro - Departure

Today, be prepared to leave a bit of your heart behind as you depart this magical country.

Transfer to airport for flight Paro to Delhi or Kolkata to meet your international flight.

Safe travels and we hope to welcome you on an unforgettable E.Y.H.O trip soon!

# Details

## INCLUDES

- conceptualized and led by Shila who has travelled extensively in North East India
- local English-speaking destination guides
- all workshops and demos
- all group airport and road transfers in private air-conditioned transportation
- all water transportation by private boat where possible, and by public ferry when not
- accommodation in select 4\*-5\* boutique and heritage hotels. Note: accommodation in Khonoma Village features clean, basic guesthouse lodging (best available)
- all monument and excursion fees
- **all meals**
- Bhutan Visa fee
- . . . and much much more!

## WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- International flight, tipping, and travel insurance
- beverages at included lunches and dinners
- Indian visa fee



# Costs



Led by E.Y.H.O. leader Shila

Cost option per person in USD	Northeast India (11 days)	Bhutan (11 days)
<b>Double occupancy</b>	USD 2780	USD 3980
<b>Single supplement</b>	USD 1200	USD 1380
<b>Domestic flights</b>	<b>Delhi – Dimapur:</b> USD 175 pp <b>Kolkata – Dimapur:</b> USD 85 pp	<b>Guwahati-Paro, Paro-Delhi:</b> USD 650 pp <b>Guwahati-Paro, Paro-Kolkata:</b> USD 460 pp

Extra night including 2 airport transfers:

Delhi – USD 95 pp in double occ./ add USD 60 for own room

Kolkata – USD 75pp double occ/add USD 55 for own room

Airport transfers other than group

Dimapur and Guwahati: USD 35pp

Paro: USD 45pp

## Enquiries

[shila@eyhotours.com](mailto:shila@eyhotours.com)

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<http://www.eyhotours.com>

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