Tour Dossier
Himalayan Kingdoms – Sikkim & Bhutan
Classic Tour | 24 Days | Active Pace

This document has been designed to provide a straightforward description of the physical activities involved in sightseeing or travelling during the tour. All passengers should read this dossier to assess the physical requirements of the programme and their ability to complete the tour.

Classic Tours
Our Classic Tours are designed for those who wish to see the iconic sites and magnificent treasures on a fully-inclusive excellent value group tour.

Himalayan Kingdoms is an Active Pace tour. This has been defined in our brochure as; Tours require a good level of fitness, as they are physically more demanding. They may involve hiking, and some travel to remote, high altitude areas where tourist facilities are less developed.

While you will encounter extensive sightseeing on foot and climbing of stairs and in/out of boats throughout the tour, these programmes are comfortably operated to appeal to most people. Generally, these tours are shorter in duration and visit the mainstream tourist attractions.

Tour highlights:
On our Himalayan Kingdoms - Sikkim & Bhutan itinerary, you will visit:
- **Kolkata** - Formerly known as Calcutta, it was the capital under the British Raj until 1911. Famous for its cricket culture, Bengali film industry and artistic heritage
- **Darjeeling** - Premier hill station set amongst a dramatic backdrop of tea plantations, mountain ridges & of course the Himalayas. Home to the famous Darjeeling tea
- **Pelling** - Famous for its stunning views of Mt Kanchenjunga, Pelling is surrounded by alpine forest, waterfalls and fascinating monasteries
- **Gangtok** - Cosmopolitan capital of Sikkim perched on a crest of the Himalayas, and once an important stop in the trade route between Tibet and India.
• **Kalimpong** - Scenic bazaar town nestled in the Himalayan Valleys and a former hill station under the British Raj
• **Gorumara Wildlife Sanctuary** - Wildlife retreat declared a National Park in 1994, famous for its population of the Asiatic One-Horned Rhino
• **Phuentsholing** - Overland gateway into Bhutan and thriving commercial centre situated at the base of the Himalayas
• **Thimphu** - Capital city of Bhutan and the centre of government, religion and commerce. The city possesses an interesting mix of old world tradition and new development
• **Punakha** - Sits in a fertile valley that produces abundant crops and fruits and is also home to the impressive Punakha Dzong
• **Bumthang** - Beautiful Valley that is home to significant monasteries and is the traditional home to the great Buddhist teacher Pema Linga
• **Trongsa** - Central Hub of Bhutan and home to some spectacular national landscape and the Trongsa Dzong
• **Paro** - Gateway to the Taktsang Monastery (Tiger’s Nest) and home to many of Bhutan’s oldest monasteries and temples

**Destination Profile**

**India** - India evokes images of colourful religious festivals, deserts lined with historic forts, tented camps nestled in sand dunes, delicious food and royal palaces. Abundant wildlife such as the Asian Elephant and the Royal Bengal Tiger are found in the numerous national parks and wildlife sanctuaries. All of these images of India may be experienced on our tours, but the most enduring memories that you will take away with you is of the happy, smiling people.

**Bhutan** - Known to the Bhutanese as Druk Yul, ‘Land of the Thunder Dragon’, Bhutan opened its doors to tourism in 1974 and is perhaps the world’s most exclusive tourist destination. Bhutan has successfully retained its distinct cultural entity, enabling travellers to experience the full glory of this ancient land. It is embodied in its monastic, strategic fortresses (known as dzongs), ancient temples (lhakhangs), monasteries (gompas) and stupas (chortens), which dot the countryside with prayer flags.

**Development** - Although India is developing quickly, it still lacks the international standards of civil infrastructure and tourist facilities. For example, you may see a hole in the road without a warning sign or safety barricade; concepts of personal responsibility are also different to those in Australia. The same information can be applied to travelling in Sikkim and Bhutan. While efforts are being made by local government to improve facilities and infrastructure, roads are still quite undeveloped. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in Australia. However, all of our suppliers meet local safety standards as a minimum. We want you to have an enjoyable holiday so we ask that you take extra care, use your common sense as well as refer to notices and follow advice from your National Escort/Local Guide.

**Roads in India, Sikkim and Bhutan** - Main and inner city roads in India have a reputation for being very congested. For this reason, it may not always be possible to return to your hotel after sightseeing to freshen up before going to the restaurant for dinner. Roads in India, Sikkim and Bhutan have generally been improved over recent years, but traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. Road construction work usually covers an enormous section of road - not just one or two kilometres as you may be used to. For this reason, the timings listed in the sections below are approximations only.

**Cuisine in India, Sikkim and Bhutan** - India cuisine is one of the most influential, diverse and flavoursome culinary styles in the world. Indian dishes incorporate many spices and seasoning to create an explosion of flavors. Though Indian cuisine can vary greatly from the Indian food we get in Australia, it is important to keep an open mind and be adventurous. All meals (excluding drinks) are included in our fully inclusive Himalayan Kingdom group tour, from the groups’ arrival until the groups’ day of departure. Please be aware that dishes selected for your meals reflect the cooking styles and signature dishes of the local area you are in. Sikkimese cuisine depends greatly on the seasonal produce. Most meals will include grains (rice or barley),

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potatoes, vegetables and some meat. Bhutanese cuisine consists of steamed rice (red or white) served with spicy curries and can be vegetarian and non-vegetarian. Most hotels offer buffet-style meals that include Continental, Chinese and Bhutanese food.

**Joining Your Tour** - The tour is 24 days in duration including international flights. Travellers booked on ‘Land Only’ arrangements should make their own way to the starting point. Join the tour on Day 1 in Kolkata and end the tour on Day 23 in Kolkata. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

**Itinerary changes**

1. Our intention is to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however order of events and sightseeing may vary according to local conditions.

**Flight Delays or Changes to Arrival Times** - Due to unforeseen circumstances, flights can be delayed, and therefore connecting flights may be missed. If you find yourself in this situation, please contact our India office on +91 98 1899 0222 OR +91 98 1048 8398 (outside India) or 98 1899 0222 OR 98 1048 8398 (within India) to urgently advise your arrival details have changed. Please ensure you have your trip number, tour name (both included in your final documentation) and new arrival details (flight number and arrival time) handy to pass on to our local office in India. This will ensure your National Escort/Local Guide can be informed of your most up to date information and ensure someone is at the airport to meet you on arrival. There is also a dedicated duty officer available 24 hours a day at the international airport, who can be contacted on +91 81 3039 1236 if required upon arrival in Delhi.

If we are not advised of late changes and missed connections, Wendy Wu Tours cannot guarantee someone will be able to meet you upon arrival in India as our local office will have no way of knowing which flight you will be arriving on. Wendy Wu Tours will not be responsible for providing reimbursement of transportation costs from the airport to your hotel in the event that our local office was not advised of changes to arrival times.
**Day 1: Australia to Kolkata**

**Day Outline**
Fly with Singapore Airlines to Kolkata for a two night stay. *Darwin passengers may depart one day earlier.*

**Physical Description**
You will be met at the Kolkata International Airport in the Arrivals Hall tonight by your National Escort/Local Guide from Wendy Wu Tours. Together with any other group members who may be arriving at a similar time, you will transfer (45 minutes to 1 hour drive) to your hotel and check-in. *In the event of flight delays or changes to arrival times, please see the details above as to what to do in this circumstance.*

**Destination Information**
**Kolkata** - Formally known as Calcutta, Kolkata was once the British capital in India until it was transferred to New Delhi in 1912. Modern day Kolkata can trace its history back to 1690 when the villages Sutanuti, Godindapur and Kolikata were formally signed over to the British East India Company. Over the next 200 years the British turned these villages into a miniature version of London with large English gardens, boulevards and buildings. As well as renaming the city, the street names have also been changed from their old English names to Indian ones, though the locals still refer to them by their original names.

Today Kolkata is experiencing massive growth in the number of new high-rise residential and office complexes being built as the city strives to house its 14.7 million inhabitants and ease its poverty and overcrowding problems. It is also the only Indian city with an operating tram system.

**Day 2: Kolkata**

**Day Outline**
Enjoy the morning free at leisure. In the afternoon explore the city of Kolkata, visiting sites such as the Victoria Memorial, the Kali temple and drive past Fort Williams.

**Physical Description**
This morning a tour introduction will be held in the hotel. Food and drinks will not be served at this meeting; it is simply an opportunity for your group to meet and learn more about travelling in India. This afternoon enjoy a sightseeing tour around Kolkata, involving approximately 3 hours on foot. Sightseeing includes a visit to Kali temple. Please note that many foreigners find the temple confronting as they still make live animal sacrifices here (usually at midday) and can be crowded and pushy. To create the image of blood running on the ground, for example, they grind hibiscus flowers with water to run deep red. Goats are ritually sacrificed each day to honour the goddess Kali, known for her destructiveness. There is an obligatory donation of at least INR 50 (AUD $1) each person at the temple. This is not included in your tour cost. Locals pay this so foreigners should too! Afterwards visit a Jain temple - refer to *Appropriate Dress* section below.

**Destination Information**
**Victoria Memorial** - Commonly known as the British Taj Mahal. Built using marble from other Indian palaces, including marble once found in the Red Fort in Delhi, this grand, white marble building was built in honour of Queen Victoria after her death.

**Kali Temple** - The original Kali Temple was built more than 350 years ago on this location where Sati, Lord Shiva’s consort, was destroyed by the Sudarshan Chakra and it is thought one of her toes fell here.

**Fort Williams** - Dating back to the British Raj, Fort Williams is situated on the banks of Hooghly River and was named after King William III. Taking nearly 10 years to complete, the fort spans an area of 5sq km.

**Day 3: Kolkata to Siliguri via New Jalpaiguri**

**Day Outline**
Rise early this morning and explore the flower market, where you will have an amazing view of Howrah Bridge, one of the busiest cantilever bridges in the world. Visit Kimhartuli and a Jain temple dedicated to Paresnath, who was the 23rd Jain Tirthankaras. In the afternoon, transfer to the railway station to board the train to New Jalpaiguri. Upon arrival drive to Siliguri and check into your hotel for an overnight stay.

**Physical Description**
Touring today involves around 2-3 hours on foot - refer to *Appropriate Dress* below. Later in the afternoon board your day train to New Jalpaiguri. The train will depart at
1415 from Howrah Junction Railway Station in Kolkata and reach New Jalpaiguri Railway Station at 2210 (8 hours train journey). Upon arrival in New Jalpaiguri you will transfer to your Siliguri hotel for one night stay.

[N.B: As our train is a day train, our seats will be in an AC Chair Car. More than likely you will not be able to purchase any food or drink on the train, so if you need snacks make sure to pre-purchase them before boarding. The train carriages are shared, so at all times please be aware of your belongings.]

**Destination Information**

**Flower Market** - Located beneath the east end of Howrah Bridge and is probably eastern India’s largest flower market with hundreds of stalls.

**Kumhartuli** - The artisan’s colony where clay idols are made for Hindu festivals.

**Siliguri** - Best known as the gateway to North East India, Siliguri is located in West Bengal. A sprawling city, it’s the perfect base to exploring the surrounding area.

**Day 4: Siliguri to Darjeeling**

**Day Outline**
Depart Siliguri and begin the drive to Darjeeling, passing through hills and tea plantations. Upon arrival proceed to your hotel for a two night stay.

**Physical Description**

**Darjeeling altitude – 2,045m**
Drive approximately 3-4 hours (80km) to Darjeeling. Upon arrival check-in to your hotel and enjoy the rest of the afternoon at your leisure.

Please Note: Electricity shortages are common in Darjeeling.

**Destination Information**

Nestled in the lower Himalayas, Darjeeling has an altitude of 2,134m. The name is derived from 'Dorje Ling' meaning ‘the place of the Dorje’, or ‘the Mystic’. Darjeeling is more commonly associated with the production of high-quality tea.

**Day 5: Darjeeling**

**Day Outline**
Rise early this morning and enjoy a jeep safari to Tiger Hill, where hopefully you will view a clear sunrise over Mt. Kanchenjunga (weather dependent). Visit the Yiga Choling Monastery before returning to Darjeeling for breakfast. Catch the famous steam powered ‘Toy Train’ around the hillside before visiting the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute (closed on Thursdays) and a nearby tea plantation.

**Physical Description**

**Ghoom altitude – 2,258m**
Rise before dawn to catch a jeep or **sumo bus** to Tiger Hill, 15km outside of town. Sightseeing here involves walking from wherever the vehicle parks to the top of the lookout. After viewing the sunrise from the lookout, there is easy sightseeing at a monastery near Ghoom before returning to the hotel. After breakfast, the group coach will take you to Darjeeling station to enjoy a ride on the **‘Toy Train’** around the hillside (approximately 1 hour). Drive back to the hotel in the group coach for lunch, or you may have the option to catch the train back to Darjeeling as well. Visit the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute spending 1-2 hours at the site. You will visit a tea plantation today where there will be walking over uneven surfaces.

**Destination Information**

**Tiger Hill** - A highlight of the Darjeeling area, Tiger Hill is located approximately 11km from the city centre. It offers one of the most magnificent views over Mt. Kanchenjunga, the third highest peak in the world.

**Ghoom Monastery** - Also known as Yiga Choling Monastery. One of the oldest monasteries in the area; it enshrines an image of the ‘Coming Buddha’ or ‘Maitriya Buddha’. It was constructed in 1875 and belongs to the Gelugpa Sect.

**Toy Train** - The UNESCO World Heritage listed steam powered ‘Toy Train’ travels around the hillside. The ‘Toy Train’ is considered an engineering marvel and is sure to be one of the highlights of your time in India.

**Himalayan Mountaineering Institute** - Founded in 1954, the HMI has provided training for many of India’s leading mountaineers. The institute also houses a museum, which showcases memorabilia from the 1922 and 1924 Everest expeditions as well of more recent attempts.

**Day 6: Darjeeling to Pelling**

**Day Outline**
Commence the drive to Pelling in Sikkim. Just before arriving in Pelling, visit the Pemayangtse Monastery. Upon arrival in Pelling, proceed to your hotel for a two night stay.

**Physical Description**

**Pelling altitude – 2,150m**
Drive approximately 6-7 hours (136km) to Pelling, visiting Pemayangtse Monastery en route. Sightseeing is easy here, with few steps – refer to **Appropriate Dress** below.
**Destination Information**

**Pemayangtse Monastery** - Perched at an altitude of 2,084m, it is one of the oldest monasteries in Sikkim. Originally built for 'ta-sang' lamas (the purest of monks), the monastery now serves the entire community. One of the major attractions of the Pemayangtse Monastery is a seven-tiered painted wooden structure, portraying Guru Rimpoche's Heavenly Palace 'Santopalri'. The Chaam (monk dance) is held every year, on the 28th and 29th day of the 12th month on the Tibetan Lunar calendar. The lamas also take part in the dance and dress up in beautiful costumes to represent Mahakala and Guru Drag-dmar.

**Sikkim** - Located in the eastern Himalayas, the state of Sikkim is spread below Mt. Kanchenjunga. Sikkim is bound by Tibet in the north, West Bengal in the south, Tibet and Bhutan in the east and Nepal in the west. Pelling is famous for its views of Mt. Kanchenjunga, which the locals worship as a protecting deity, as well as its proximity to a number of significant ancient Tibetan monasteries.

**Day 7: Pelling**

**Day Outline**
Explore Khecheopalri Lake and Kanchenjunga Falls this morning. Return to Pelling and enjoy the afternoon at leisure.

**Physical Description**
Pelling altitude – 2,150m

Today you will travel in jeep or sumo bus for your sightseeing. Drive approximately 1.5 hours (18km) to Khecheopalri Lake then Kanchenjunga Falls; the road is uneven and unsealed. Sightseeing here is leisurely. Return to Pelling for lunch. The rest of the afternoon is at your leisure.

**Destination Information**

**Khecheopalri Lake** - Considered to be one of the most sacred lakes in Sikkim by both Buddhist and Hindus. It is believed that whatever is wished for in front of the lake will come true. There is also a myth that when a leaf falls on the placid clear water surface, a bird immediately picks it up.

**Kanchenjunga Falls** - A perennial waterfall noted for its beauty and serenity.

**Day 8: Pelling to Gangtok**

**Day Outline**
Commence the drive to Gangtok this morning, visiting Tashiding Monastery en route.

**Physical Description**
Gangtok altitude – 1,677m

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Drive approximately 4-5 hours (130km) to Gangtok and check into the hotel.

**Destination Information**

**Tashiding Monastery** - The monastery was founded in 1717 by one of the three lamas who brought Buddhism to Sikkim. It provides breathtaking views of the scenery below.

**Gangtok** - The name Gangtok is taken from the Sikkimese word for 'hilltop'. It is perched atop a ridge of the Himalaya and is the capital of Sikkim. The town itself, whilst still steeped in tradition and custom, is rapidly embracing the modern world. The region is famous for the exotic and colourful flowers including the Rhododendron, Orchids and Blue Poppies.

**Day 9: Gangtok**

**Day Outline**
Explore Enchey Monastery this morning (closed on Mondays), located on a hilltop above Gangtok. Next visit Sikkim Research Institute of Technology (SRIT) and Do Drul Chorten.

**Physical Description**
Gangtok altitude – 1,677m

This morning there is easy sightseeing within Gangtok, which includes visiting Enchey Monastery – refer to Appropriate Dress below.

**Destination Information**

**Enchey Monastery** - The 200-year-old Enchey Monastery was rebuilt in 1910 and belongs to the Nyingma Order. It was once the hermitage site of Lama Drubthob Karpo, a tantric master known for his power of flying; the monastery was built on a site blessed by him. Enchey means 'Solitary Temple' and was built here with the intention that no other construction would be built near it.

**Sikkim Research Institute of Technology (SRIT)** - situated in Deorali and within walking distance from the main town of Gangtok. Also known as the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, after the late Chogyal of Sikkim, Palden Thondup Namgyal the institute’s brainchild, the institute has since become one of the most prestigious depository of Tibetan literature. Rare manuscripts, paintings, thangkas, statues, religious objects and other works of art and history can be found here. This institute was established to promote research into the language and traditions of Tibet, as well as the Mahayana sect of Buddhism.

**Do Drul Chorten** - A Tibetan pagoda built by Trullshi Rimpoche, head of the Nyingma order of Tibetan Buddhism, in the year 1945.

**Day 10: Gangtok to Kalimpong**

**Day Outline**
Depart Gangtok and drive to the Dharam Chakra Centre and the Old Rumtek Monastery. Explore the two sites before
commencing the drive to Kalimpong, where you will proceed to your hotel for a two night stay.

**Physical Description**

**Kalimpong – 1,250m**

Drive approximately 1 hour (24km) to Old Rumtek Monastery for easy sightseeing. Continue driving 3 hours (80km) to Kalimpong. The next day is at your leisure.

**Destination Information**

**Dharma Chakra Centre** - Built in 1960 by the late Gyalwa Karmapa XVI, the Dharma Chakra Centre is a replica of the original Kagyurpa Monastery in Tsurphu, Tibet. Located within the complex is the main monastery, the memorial stupa of the Gyalwa Karmapa XVI inlaid with gold plate and semi-precious stones, Shri Nalanda Institute for Higher Buddhist Studies and the Jamyang Khang Primary School.

**Old Rumtek Monastery** - Originally built in 1730 by the IX Karmapa but was destroyed by fire and had to be reconstructed to its present state.

**Kalimpong** - Located deep in the valleys of the Himalayas, Kalimpong is a bustling, though still relatively small bazaar town set among the rolling foothills of ‘Deolo and Durbindra’. Kalimpong belonged to the Chogyals of Sikkim until the beginning of the 18th century, when it was taken from them by the Bhutanese. In the 19th century it passed into the hands of the British and thus became part of West Bengal.

**Day 11: Kalimpong**

**Day Outline**

Today is at leisure to take a break from the driving and relax in this quaint town. You may choose to visit the Hindu Temple in town, or the local Catholic Church, markets or a local monastery to hear the monks chanting.

**Day 12: Kalimpong to Gorumara Wildlife Sanctuary**

**Day Outline**

Drive to Gorumara Wildlife Sanctuary. In the afternoon embark on a jeep safari through park.

**Physical Description**

**Gorumara – 1,625m**

Drive approximately 4 hours (97km) to the Gorumara Wildlife Sanctuary and check-in at our hotel. The afternoon sanctuary programme includes a jeep safari for approximately 2 hours.

**Destination Information**

**Gorumara Wildlife Sanctuary** - Located on the bank of the Murti River in the Dooars Plains in North Bengal. Famous for its natural population of the Great Indian One Horned Rhino, this small forest area was declared a wildlife sanctuary in 1949 and a national park in 1992.

Besides the One Horned Rhino, other major fauna of the park includes Indian elephants, bison, leopards and more than 200 species of birds.

**Day 13: Gorumara Wildlife Sanctuary to Phuentsholing**

**Day Outline**

Depart Gorumara Wildlife Sanctuary and drive to Phuentsholing. Upon arrival, check into your hotel before visiting the Zangtho Pelri Lhahkhang.

**Physical Description**

**Phuentsholing altitude – 300m**

Drive approximately 3.5 hours (103km) to Phuentsholing. Here meet your Bhutanese National Escort/Local Guide. Visit Zangtho Pelri Lhakhang – refer to Appropriate Dress below.

**Destination Information**

**Phuentsholing** - This small, modern town in the south of Bhutan is the gateway for overland travellers. Phuentsholing is a fascinating mixture of Bhutanese and Indian cultures where the people, languages, costumes and goods from both countries are all intermixed. On top of a low hill at nearby Kharbandi, a small Gompa is situated in a garden of tropical plants and flowers, overlooking the town surrounding the plains. The Amo Chu, commonly known as the Torsa River, flows alongside this town and is a favourite spot for fishermen.

**Zangtho Pelri Lhakhang** - Located in the centre of the city, the Lhakhang or temple represents the heaven of Guru Rinpoche.

**Day 14: Phuentsholing to Thimphu**

**Day Outline**

Leave Phuentsholing this morning and drive along the national highway to Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan, for a two night stay. En route to the capital, visit Kharbandi Gompa.

**Physical Description**

**Thimphu altitude – 2,248m to 2,648m**

Drive approximately 6-7 hours (180km) to Thimphu via the Kharbandi Gompa, where there will be light sightseeing. The main highway is undergoing widening; therefore ongoing construction may be present.

**Destination Information**

**Kharbandi Gompa** - A Tibetan Buddhist monastery founded in 1967 by the royal grandmother. The monastery contains paintings based on the life of Buddha.

**Thimphu** - The centre of government, religion and commerce in Bhutan and is located in a valley with the Wang Chhu River running through the centre of town. Thimphu is the busiest town in Bhutan but remains the only capital in the world without traffic lights. They were once installed but removed after only one day because too many

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people complained about them being impersonal. Local police have now taken their place.

**Day 15: Thimphu**

**Day Outline**
Your sightseeing tour of Thimphu begins this morning with a visit to the National Library, the nearby Institute for Zorig Chusum and a viewing of the National Institute of Traditional Medicine. After lunch discover the National Memorial Chorten, browse a handicraft emporium, tour the Folk Heritage Museum and the Textile Museum before driving out of town to Thimphu Zoo to see the Bhutanese Takin. Later offer prayers to Buddha at Buddha Point and explore Trashi Chhoe Dzong.

**Physical Description**
Thimphu altitude – 2,248m to 2,648m
Today is easy sightseeing in and around Thimphu. Lunch will be served at the hotel. In total today there will be approximately 3–3.5 hours of walking.

**Destination Information**

**National Library** - Serves to preserve Bhutan’s literacy history. Established in 1967, the library contains ancient Dzongkha and Tibetan texts and is a good example of traditional Bhutanese architecture.

**Institute for Zorig Chusum** - Also commonly known as the Painting School. The institute offers a six year course on the 13 traditional arts and crafts of Bhutan

**National Memorial Chorten** - The building of this chorten was originally the idea of Bhutan's 3rd King, H.M. Jigme Dorji Wangchuck ('the father of modern Bhutan'), who had wished to build a monument dedicated to world peace and prosperity. After His Majesty's untimely death in 1972, the royal family and cabinet resolved to fulfil his wishes and build the memorial.

**Folk Heritage Museum** - This museum is basically an old farmhouse built and decorated in traditional design and preserved as a reminder of the traditional way of life.

**National Textile Museum** - View the traditional dress of the various minorities found in Bhutan.

**Bhutanese Takin** - Bhutan's National animal is said to be the creation of the great saint Lama Drukpa Kunley. Legend says this is being created by Lama Kunley.

**Buddha Point** - Located a short drive from Thimphu city centre. Pay your obeisance and offer prayers to the Buddha, the largest statue in the country, then walk around and admire the view of Thimphu valley below.

**Trashi Chhoe Dzong** - The ‘Fortress of the Glorious Religion’, which was initially erected in 1641. It now houses some ministries, His Majesty's secretariat, and is also the summer residence of the Dratshang (the central monk body). It is open to visitors while the Monk Body moves in winter to Punakha.

**Day 16: Thimphu to Punakha**

**Day Outline**
Visit a local market this morning before departing Thimphu and commencing the drive to Punakha. We pass through Dochu La, which is marked by prayer flags and chortens. On a clear day there are superb views of the mountain ranges including Gangkar Puensum, the highest peak in Bhutan at 7,497m. Just past the pass there is a café where we can stop for a toilet break before we descend into the valley to Punakha. After lunch visit the Punakha Dzong and newly built Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten.

**Physical Description**
Punakha altitude – 1300m
Drive approximately 3-4 hours (75km) to Punakha via Dochu-la (Pass) (3,140m). Arrive in Punakha and check into your hotel. Depending on your group booking, overnight accommodation may be booked in Wangdue Phodrang – 30 minutes from Punakha. Later visit Punakha’s 17th century Dzong located 30 minutes from Punakha which will be easy sightseeing – refer to **Appropriate Dress** below.

**Destination Information**

**Dochu La Pass** - The pass is a popular tourist spot as it offers stunning 360 degree panoramic views of the Himalayan mountain range.

**Punakha Dzong** - Located on the junction of the two rivers. This Dzong is the second oldest in Bhutan (built between 1637-38) and is still a working monastery. During its life it has survived six fires, two floods, two earthquakes and endless sieges from Tibetan armies

**Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten** - Commissioned by the Queen Mother, it took nine years to build this 4-storey temple. The temple is dedicated to the well-being of the kingdom, its people and all beings.

**Punakha** - Served as the capital of Bhutan until 1955 and is still the winter seat of the Je Khenpo (Chief Abbot). Blessed with a temperate climate and fed by the Pho Chhu (male) and Mo Chhu (female) rivers, Punakha is the most fertile valley in the country.

**Day 17: Punakha – Trongsa to Bumthang**

**Day Outline**
Today is an early start as it is a long day of driving ahead. Stop in Wangdue Phodrang to browse a local market before continuing to Bumthang. Slowly ascend to Pele La, the traditional boundary between east and west, and stop outside the village of Chendbji to see the Chendbji Chortem. After lunch, continue the drive and pass through Trongsa, located on the side of a very steep valley called Mangde Chhu. Our first sight of Trongsa and its impressive Dzong is from a lookout on the opposite side of the valley.

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After passing through the town ascend the eastern side of Mangde Chhu and switchback above the town to head towards Yotong La, again marked by prayer flags.

In the next valley, Chhume Valley, it is very apparent that the architecture in the farm houses and small villages is subtly different to those located in West Bhutan. The road also has some of the straightest stretches of highway in the country tempered by constant speed humps. At the end of Chhume Valley is a small village called Zungney which is known for its weavers.

One of the first hydro-electric plants is also located close by (Hydro Electricity is Bhutan's largest Gross National Product earner, followed by tourism and the local lottery). There is one smaller pass to go through before you descend into the valley where Bumthang (Jakar) is located.

Physical Description
Bumthang altitude – 2,580m
Trongsa altitude – 2,180m
Drive approximately 7-8 hours (210km) to Bumthang via Trongsa. Today is a full day of driving and some quick sightseeing with a stop for lunch. The drive from Punakha to Pele-la (Pass) (3,300m) takes 2 hours. En route, visit Trongsa Dzong and Ta Dzong Museum - refer to Appropriate Dress below for all monasteries and the Dzong.

Continue towards Bumthang, driving across Yutong-La (Pass) and into Chumey Valley (3,425m) which takes 2 to 3 hours (67km). Refer to Alternative transport and road conditions below. When you reach Bumthang, check into your hotel.

[NB: Please note: Most toilet stops today will be ‘bush toilets’ – make sure you have toilet paper in your possession.]

Destination Information
Bumthang - The religious heartland of the nation and home to some of its oldest temples and monasteries. The Bumthang Dzongkhag consists of four main valleys Ura, Chumey, Tang and Choekho.

Day 18: Bumthang
Day Outline
Explore the beautiful valley of Bumthang this morning. Visit Kurje Lhakhang and Jambye Lhakhang Temple. From here you have the option of either enjoying an easy hike or drive by bus to Tamshing Lhamkhang Monastery. Drive back to Bumthang where you will enjoy a stroll in the streets and visit the Jakar Dzong.

Physical Description
Bumthang altitude – 2,580m
Touring this morning is mostly by foot over the local trails in the foothills surrounding Bumthang - easy bushwalking
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standard. After visiting Kurje Lhakhang, drive approximately 10 minutes (2km) to Jambye Lhakhang then drive or hike across the river to Tamshing Lhamkhang Monastery which has some of the oldest wall paintings in Bhutan. Your last stop is Jakar Dzong, overlooking the Chokhor Valley. Sightseeing today will involve around 6-7 hours on foot with a break for lunch.

Destination Information
Kurje Lhakhang - Where the Saint Padmasambhava subdued a local demon and left his body imprinted on a rock.

Jambey Lhakhang - Founded in the 7th century by Songtsen Gampo, a Tibetan King, Jambey Lhakhang is one of the oldest temples in Bhutan. The king built 108 temples in a day to subdue the demons that resided in the Himalayas. This temple is one of two built in Bhutan.

Tamshing Lhamkhang Monastery - Built by the Bhutanese saint Pema Lingpa in 1501, the monastery was completed in 1505.

Day 19: Bumthang to Punakha
Day Outline
Today there is a long day of driving ahead. Depart Bumthang and head back west over Pele La. Stop en route for lunch before continuing to Punakha for an overnight stay.

Physical Description
Gangtey altitude – 3,000m
Punakha altitude – 1,300m
Drive approximately 7 to 8 hours (240km) from Bumthang to Punakha, passing through Pele-la (Pass), with a break for lunch. Refer to Road Conditions below.

Day 20: Punakha to Paro
Day Outline
Rise early to hike Chimi Lhakhang. Continue by road to Paro, stopping en route at the Simtokha Dzong. In the afternoon, visit Ta Dzong and Rinpung Dzong.

Physical Description
Paro altitude – 2,280m
Rise early to hike to Chimi Lhakhang. Drive approximately 4 hours (124km) to Paro visiting Simtokha Dzong en route. Upon arrival, check into the hotel. Later visit Ta Dzong, and Rinpung Dzong (home of the Paro Tsechu Festival) – steady uphill walk to reach both may be required. Refer to Appropriate Dress below for visiting the Dzongs.

Destination Information
Chimi Lhakhang - Standing on a hillock, the monastery was built in 1499 by the 14th Drukpa, Ngawang Choegyel, after the site was blessed by the “Divine Madman” the maverick saint Drukpa Kuenley. Known as the ‘Temple of Fertility’. Call 1300 727 998 to speak to a Reservations Consultant
Simtokha Dzong - The oldest fortress of the Kingdom, the Dzong overlooks the entire Thimphu Valley. Built by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel, who built many dzongs in Bhutan.

Paro - Paro’s beautiful valley encapsulates a rich culture, scenic beauty and hundreds of myths and legends. It is home to many of Bhutan’s oldest temples and monasteries, the country’s only airport and the National Museum. The Paro valley is one of the Kingdom’s most fertile, producing the bulk of Bhutan’s famous red rice from its terraced fields.

Ta Dzong - Located on a ridge immediately above Rinpung Dzong, Ta Dzong was originally built as a watchtower to protect Rinpung Dzong; ‘Ta’ means ‘to see’ in Dzongkha, so the watchtower of a Dzong was called ‘Ta Dzong’. On account of their function, watchtowers are always round in shape. In 1968, Paro’s Ta Dzong was inaugurated as the National Museum and now holds a fascinating collection of art, relics, religious thangka paintings, Bhutan’s exquisite postage stamps, coins and handicrafts, together with a small natural history collection.

Rinpung Dzong - The ‘fortress of the heap of jewels’, built in 1646 by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. The approach to the Dzong is through a traditional covered bridge (called the Nemi Zam) and then up a paved stone path running alongside the imposing outerwalls.

Day 21: Paro
Day Outline
Hike to the Taktsang Monastery this morning. Return to Paro in the afternoon, visiting Kyichu Lhakhang en route.

Physical Description
Paro altitude – 2,280m
Drive (approximately 20 minutes) to the start point for a hike to Taktsang Monastery – see Climbing Steps section below. There are ponies for hire, but pony operators will not take any passenger over 80kg. Cost of pony is not included in the tour price and paid for at the time. The moderate hike takes all morning meaning a vegetarian lunch is served at the cafeteria located inside the Monastery, which is run by monks. Afterwards, return to Paro and visit Kyichu Lhakhang, (if time permits) one of the oldest and most sacred temples of the Kingdom.

Destination Information
Taktsang Monastery (Tiger’s Nest) - One of the most famous monasteries in Bhutan. The monastery is 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 place, hence why the monastery is also called ‘Tiger’s Nest’. This site, which has long been recognised as a most sacred place, was visited by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal in 1646, the religious and temporal ruler of Bhutan. It is a place of pilgrimage that Bhutanese try to visit at least once in their lifetime. In April 1998 a fire severely damaged the main structure of the building but it has since been fully restored to its original grandeur.

Trek Summary - The trek to the Taktsang Monastery is very steep in some places and can be unstable on foot, particularly on the downward legs as the steps (close to 800 of them) are only found between the view point and the monastery with the remainder of the path being dirt. Despite this, the journey is certainly worthwhile on account of the superb views en route. However, if you have poor knees or hips, are prone to vertigo, dislike heights or are physically unfit, you would certainly struggle to undertake this trek or at best only make it to the cafeteria. One option is to hire a pony for the uphill journey only. Pony hire is at your own expense and ranges from 10-15 USD. Ponies cannot be hired for the downhill journey.

The hike to the monastery can be broken down into various stages:

The first stage is the trek to the cafeteria (where a vegetarian lunch will be served today) which is situated on a rocky outcrop across a ravine from the monastery. This leg of the trek takes approximately 45-60 minutes, depending on your level of fitness. Horses (which are really only small ponies) can be arranged for this leg of the trek at your own cost. At the cafeteria you will stop for some tea or coffee and biscuits while pondering the journey ahead and looking at the monastery in the distance above you.

The second stage of the trek is from the cafeteria to the lookout opposite the monastery. This leg of the trek takes close to one hour. At this point some may be content to snap photos and then return to the cafeteria.

The third stage is the trek/climb down the 475 steps in the cliff face to the bottom of the ravine. You will cross over a stream and waterfall before the path again ascends another 300 or so steps to the entrance of the monastery. Once here you should be able to enter into the monastery and view the cave where Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal meditated (cameras are not allowed inside the monastery). The visit and climb to the entrance and back to the lookout will take approximately one hour.

Kyichu Lhakhang - One of the oldest and most sacred temples of the Kingdom, Kyichu Lhakhang was built in 659AD by King Songtsen Gampo of Tibet; legend tells that it was built over the body of a giant ‘demoness’ who was preventing the spread of Buddhism.

Day 22: Paro to Kolkata
Day Outline
Farewell Bhutan and transfer to the airport for your flight to Kolkata. Upon arrival transfer to your hotel for an overnight stay. The remainder of the day is free at leisure to explore the area surrounding your hotel; take a tram trip, go for a ride in a rickshaw, or explore the markets (prices involved are at your own expense). Your hotel is located next to the main market district in Kolkata, known as

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Call 1300 727 998 to speak to a Reservations Consultant
Bidhan Chandra Roy Markets. These are located on the other side of JJ Nehru Road opposite the Oberoi Grand Hotel and the Peerless Inn. These markets specialise in Sari’s and Indian dresses and suits.

Physical Description
You will have an early drive (approximately 20 minutes) to the airport for a flight to Kolkata (1 hour).

Day 23: Depart Kolkata
Day Outline

Enjoy the day at leisure to further explore the area. The streets surrounding the hotel are shopping heaven. Please be aware of your surroundings and your personal belongings in the markets and remember to never accept their initial quote - so bargain hard! After a late check out transfer to the airport for your flight home.

Day 24: Arrive Australia
Day Outline
Arrive home today.

Tour Profile

Visa Requirements - Entry visas are required by all visitors to India and Bhutan and Wendy Wu Tours Visa Department can assist you with the process of obtaining a visa. Please be advised that your passport must have at least 6 months validity left on it when you arrive back into Australia.

For India: Entry visas are required by all visitors to India and Wendy Wu Tours Visa Department can assist you with the process of obtaining a visa. Please be advised that all Visa Applications for India MUST be completed on-line at the VFS website: www.vfsglobal.com/india/australia. Wendy Wu Tours will assist you with instructions. Once the form is completed, the application and passport must be sent to Wendy Wu Tours. Visas are valid for 6 months from the date of issue and allow you to stay in the country for up to 6 months. Visa application forms and all relevant documentation are due in our office 70 days prior to departure. Applications will not be accepted within 50 days of departure. Passports will be returned with your final documentation 2-3 weeks prior to your group tour’s scheduled departure. If you require your passport to be returned earlier, a $15 courier fee will apply.

For Bhutan: A permit is required to enter Bhutan. Our partners in India will also arrange this, as it is not available from Australia. The Bhutan Visa will also be applied for after the Indian Visa is issued. A scanned colour copy of your passport bio page will be taken by our Wendy Wu Tours Visa Department once your passport arrives in our office for the application of your Indian visa. The permit will then be applied for and a document will be sent back to our office. This is not your permit, just proof showing you have applied for one. Your actual travel permit will be stamped in your passport when you cross the border at Phuentsholing.

Insurance - We strongly encourage all customers to take a copy of their travel insurance documents (especially relevant international contact numbers) with them while on tour. We advise that you check the inclusions and procedures for lodging claims prior to your departure. These documents should be stored separately from the originals.

Accommodation - All group tour hotels have private western bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV and a telephone. Plumbing and electricity supplies can be erratic and quite often the power in hotel rooms is turned off while guests are out of the room. If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your National Escort/Local Guide.

Your accommodation has been selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a family-run guesthouse in a smaller town or a heritage-type hotel. In remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have western amenities. Hotels are generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but do please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between Australia and India. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards are met.

Alternative or Basic Accommodation - At Gorumara you will be staying overnight in basic Government run accommodation. In Bhutan, hotels on our tours are generally ‘medium range’. Hotels in Bhutan (other than those which are classed as deluxe properties and are extremely overpriced and expensive) are allocated one month prior to travel by the tourist authority. Unless you are staying in one of these deluxe hotels or visiting outside of the peak times, no particular hotel or room category can be guaranteed prior to that. All hotels we do use have private bathrooms and have air conditioning and/or a ceiling fan and bar.restaurant facilities. Travellers should however be cautioned against expecting princely comfort! Tea and coffee facilities are generally not available in your room. Some hotels do not have fridges, though in the colder months they are unnecessary if you have a balcony.
Please bear in mind that all levels of hotels can sometimes suffer from minor problems and technical difficulties (see Electricity). At each hotel your Tour Leader will try to organise the rooming arrangements to suit everyone’s requirements. If you are travelling as a couple please note that we cannot guarantee the availability of double beds. Refer to your Travel Guide’s ACCOMMODATION section for more information.

**Luggage** - All travellers are limited to two items of luggage each; a suitcase with a maximum weight of 20kg and one piece of hand luggage with a maximum weight of 7kgs. It is essential that your luggage is lockable. Please note that Indian authorities will only allow bottles onto the aircraft if they have been checked in as main baggage. Bottles in hand luggage may be confiscated. Druk Air, your carrier for your flight from Paro to Kolkata, only permits a maximum checked luggage limit of 20kgs. Please keep this in mind when packing for your upcoming trip. Any excess luggage charges incurred will be at the expense of the passenger.

**Tipping** - Tipping is a firm and expected element in the tourism industry. A nominated tipping amount is included in all group tour pricing, however is not collected in your final payment received by Wendy Wu Tours. This is so that it can be paid directly to your National Escort/Local Guide who will then distribute the tips among your main service providers – guides, drivers and attendants – on your behalf. Any other tipping, such as tips for bathroom attendants or hotel porters that are taking luggage to your room, is at your discretion based on satisfaction of services received, as are gratuities for additional requested special services. The final tipping amount will be outlined in your final documentation.

**Exchanging Cash** - It is highly recommended that when travelling to cities outside of Delhi and other main cities that extra care and attention is paid when exchanging money. US Dollars are easily exchanged throughout India however, other currencies such as Australian Dollars can generally be exchanged in hotels and airports provided notes are new and undamaged. We suggest exchanging your money before travelling to remote areas and smaller towns, as exchange facilities can be limited. Your National Escort/Local Guide will remind you to do this before departure.

Before departing Paro, all tour participants are asked to please ensure that they have changed any remaining Bhutanese Ngultrum (BTN) back into Indian Rupees (INR).

**Personal Expenses** - You will need to take some extra money to cover drinks, laundry and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. Based on the advice of previous customers an approximate amount of AU$250 per week should be sufficient; however for those that cannot resist a bargain, consider allocating a higher amount.

**Optional Tours** - Optional tours maybe offered in each city you visit during your tour. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits. Each option will be arranged locally by your National Escort/Local Guide.

**Smoking in Bhutan** - Foreign travellers are permitted to smoke in Bhutan, provided they declare all tobacco products on the border at Phuentsholing (overland border between Sikkim and Bhutan). At this time, a tax of 200% will be applied in order for you to bring your tobacco products into Bhutan. You will be given a receipt for this, and you must carry this with you at all times. Harsh penalties and imprisonment result from not following these rules. Wendy Wu Tours asks that all passengers who wish to smoke in Bhutan respect religious monuments by not smoking in these areas. Please always check with your National Escort/Local Guide on where it is appropriate to smoke.

**Transport: Roads** - Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city sightseeing, short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers where necessary.

**Alternative Transport and Road Conditions** - While in India, transport for all sightseeing will be in a small coach (no more than 24 seats). Transport in Darjeeling may be in separate 4WD vehicles (4 tour participants per vehicle). In Darjeeling, you will travel to Tiger Hill on board a sumo truck. During your time in Bhutan, you will be transported in a mini coach (no more than 18 seats) as the roads wind around mountains and through valleys, and it is easier to navigate in this type of vehicle. Your luggage will most likely travel in a second vehicle. Leg room on these small coaches may be restricted. Depending on local conditions, you may experience an elephant ride in Gorumara Wildlife Sanctuary.

**Road Condition:** Time taken in getting from A to B in this region is usually dependent on the size of your group. Roads in Sikkim and particularly in Bhutan are mostly like remote Australian country roads, tarred but a single lane. Though marked as dual lanes, they are invariably the width of one and a half lanes. Road construction work usually covers an enormous section of road – not just one or two kilometres as you may be used to.
Most of the roads are also very winding and are cut into a cliff face, giving you a magnificent view of the scenery and mountains as you drive past. This means space to pass is at a premium, and although distances are not large the time to travel these distances is a lot longer than it would take in Australia. Contintual road works are also taking place in Bhutan, with rocks being extracted to be used in the Hydro Electric Power Stations that are under construction in Bhutan. This will impact on drive times and may mean some days are full of driving including comfort stops throughout the day. Though there are toilet stops at cafes and restaurants, some will be at ‘bush toilets’ en-route, hence it is a good idea to carry some toilet paper with you at all times. Refer to your Travel Guide’s TRANSPORT section for more information.

Air - Internal flights are based on economy class, with reputable airlines.

Climbing Steps - Sightseeing at nearly all of the palaces, fortresses/Dzongs and some temples/Chortens involves climbing some steps. These palaces were built to provide defence against potential invaders so nearly all of them stand on top of a hill, while the interiors have layers of narrow hallways and steps to slow down the advance of enemies once they were inside. The steps tend to be quite large, not level and sometimes without handrails. Hindu and Buddhist temples or pagodas also tend to be built at an elevation, as this is the most auspicious position according to ancient beliefs. This means you sometimes need to walk from the bus park to the entrance, and/or need to climb some steps inside. Finally, the old hill station towns, such as Darjeeling, are located at a higher and cooler elevation and were developed as resorts to escape the heat of the lowland. They are usually made up of interconnecting roads, steps and sloped pathways so walking around the town, or even within the grounds of your hotel, may requires some physical effort.

Taktsang Monastery (Tiger’s Nest)
As the most famous of Bhutan's monasteries is perched on the side of a cliff 900m above the Paro Valley floor, this trek deserves its own mention. The climb is steep in some places and can be unstable under foot, particularly on the downward legs as steps are only found between the view point and the monastery with the remainder of the path being dirt. Despite this, the journey is certainly worthwhile on account of the superb views en route. However, this is quite a physically challenging hike and any customers that have poor knees, are prone to vertigo, dislike heights or are physically unfit will certainly struggle to keep up and at best may only make it to the halfway point; the cafeteria where lunch is served! The view from this point is quite spectacular should you not wish to continue to the top.

The hike to the monastery can be broken down into various stages. The first stage is the trek to the cafeteria (lunch stop) which is situated on a rocky outcrop across a ravine from the monastery. This leg of the trek takes approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour, depending on your level of fitness. Horses (really only small ponies) can be arranged for this leg at your own cost. Please note that the pony operators will not take any passenger over approximately 80kg in weight.

The second stage of the walk is from the cafeteria to the lookout opposite the monastery. This leg takes close to another hour. At this point some may be content to snap photos and return to the cafeteria.

The next stage is the trek/climb down the steps in the cliff face to the bottom of the ravine which crosses over a stream and waterfall before the path again ascends to the entrance of the monastery. Once here we should be able to enter into the monastery and view the cave where Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal meditated. (Please note that cameras are not allowed inside the monastery). The visit and climb to the entrance and back to the lookout will take about another hour.

People with knee or hip injuries, who have poor balance or are otherwise unable to complete these activities independently should consider the suitability of this itinerary carefully.

Consider Cultural Differences - India has many religions, cultures and histories. Foreign tourists, particularly female travellers, may be stared at as Indian women in some areas generally do not go out without their father or husband. Please be considerate of this, the local beliefs and customs and dress with consideration.

Safety & Security - The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade states ‘Due to the risk of harassment and assault, women should take particular care in all parts of India and exercise caution even if they are travelling in a group.’

For full advice on travelling to India, visit [http://smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/India](http://smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/India)

Appropriate Dress - When visiting temples or mosques, both men and women should dress in conservative, non-revealing clothing. Full-length trousers with a shirt or t-shirt for men; and pants or skirts well below the knee with a top that covers the shoulders and upper arms for women. Women might also consider carrying a ‘modesty shawl’ in their daypack – this could be a sarong or light scarf – which they can wear over their shoulders and heads to feel more comfortable while sightseeing at...
mosques. When visiting Jain temples, you must not wear or take in any leather items such as belts, watches, camera straps, purses and shoes.

Religious sites and homes throughout India – for Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Muslims or Buddhists to name a few – require all visitors to remove their shoes to enter. Even if you then need to walk outdoors, over hot or rough ground, you will not be allowed to wear shoes. You will often find shoe storage rooms near the entrance of a site where it is customary to leave your shoes near the entrance. Occasionally there are ‘shoe minders’ who will offer to keep your shoes safe for a ‘tip’ – this is not compulsory so each customer can choose to tip for this service or not. If you do not want to remove them, you will have to remain outside.

Bring some shoes that easily slip on and off, and carry a pair of thick, old socks in your daypack, which you can wear to protect your feet from any rough or hot surfaces. The following itinerary will indicate when you need to consider this.

**Group Size** - In most cases, the group will operate with a minimum of nine travellers with local guides only. If there are 10 travellers or more, your group will be accompanied by a National escort as well as local guides.

**Climate** - You will find a complete packing list and a helpful climate chart in the ‘Suggested Packing List’, which is included in the pre-departure information link sent within your deposit documentation. Seasonal weather patterns can be quite unpredictable. Up to the minute information on worldwide weather can be found on [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com).

**Vaccinations and Your Health** - We recommend that you contact either your GP or Travelvax (1300 360 164) for advice on vaccinations and travel health. Travelvax has a comprehensive website that you may also find useful [www.travelvax.com.au](http://www.travelvax.com.au).

**Before You Leave** - We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with [www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au) as in the event of an emergency, Australian Consular assistance will be more readily available. You can also access the Australian Government’s travel advisory service for up to date information about your destination on the same website.

**After your booking** - Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice followed by deposit documentation, which includes a visa application form (if applicable), and a help sheet. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approx. 2 weeks prior to departure, and will include a travel wallet, a travel guide (which includes a suggested packing list) and phrase book, along with your final itinerary and international e-tickets.

Updated: 4 October 2016
Travelling on an Active Paced Tour

We hope you are looking forward to what we are sure will be a trip of a lifetime. Before you embark on this adventure, we ask you to consider the points listed below that relate to our active paced tours. This will ensure you understand what is involved with an active paced tour and therefore help you decide if your chosen tour is right for you.

This is to ensure that your tour runs as smoothly as possible for you and your fellow tour members.

Please consider the following aspects of active paced tours prior to confirming your arrangements;

- While we believe that age is no barrier, please give special consideration to the fact that medical assistance and public infrastructure can be limited in these areas.
- There will be long periods of physical activity, including walking, climbing of stairs, in/out of boats. Tour participants who will travel with a cane/walking stick may come across difficulties. It is our experience that using a cane/walking stick in these areas where there are rough and uneven surfaces, stairs to climb and high altitudes, becomes difficult.
- Only limited meal options will be available. People with special dietary requirements should expect difficulties on these tours. Please understand that depending on the trip you are taking, you may be given very little or no meat.
- Your tour may include basic accommodation facilities including home stays, guest houses, truck stops and tented accommodation. This may mean, no or limited hot water, and no private bathroom facilities.
- There will be long periods of driving on often unsealed, rural and bumpy roads in vehicles ranging from tour coaches to local jeeps and canter vehicles.
- Altitude affects people in many different ways and a certain level of fitness is required in order to limit the effects. Please discuss how to manage altitude sickness with a health care professional.
- Overnight trains only have basic bedding in 4 berth compartments with limited or no ladder facilities to climb to the top bunk. You may be sharing with other tour members or locals.
- Some tours may have sightseeing en route to the next destination. Therefore participation is required or you will need to remain with the coach until the rest of the group has finished touring.

National Escort/Local Guides will endeavor to provide rest stops in your itinerary where possible. Please be advised that some days may have a more physical programme than others.

If you are comfortable with the above mentioned aspects of travelling on an active paced tour, we look forward to welcoming you on what is sure to be a unique and memorable experience.

However, if you have any hesitations please contact your valued travel agent or our reservations department to discuss the tour further or explore alternative options.