

TRAVEL WITH FRIENDS IN 2016

Saddhus at Kathmandu Durbar Square © Markus Koljonen via Wikimedia CC

Mountains and Monasteries

NEPAL – DARJEELING – BHUTAN

with Judy Tenzing
19 March–05 April 2016 (18 days)



R
Renaissance
Tours

Mountains and Monasteries

NEPAL, DARJEELING AND BHUTAN



TOUR LEADER

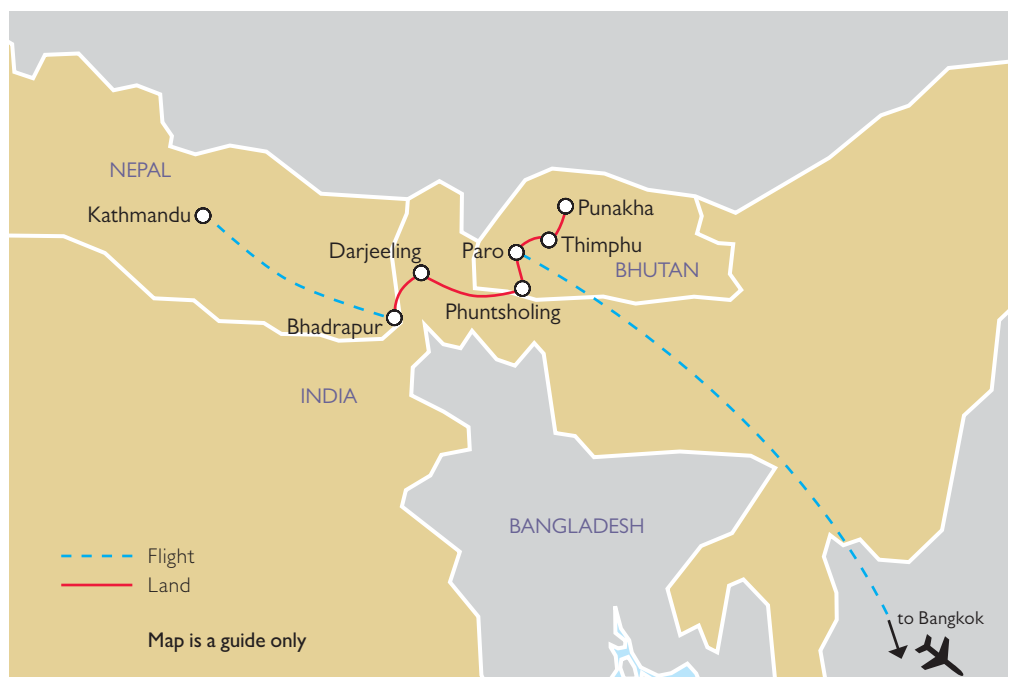
Judy Tenzing has a lifelong passion for India and the Himalaya and with over 30 years' experience as an administrator and tour leader on the great sub-continent she has a great deal to share with her fellow travellers. Judy has a degree in South Asian History and regularly presents courses at Sydney University's Centre for Continuing Education on Indian and Himalayan history and culture. In 2001 Judy published the definitive book on the history of Sherpa mountaineering – *Tenzing and the Sherpas of Everest*.

Journey through the history and cultures of the eastern Himalayas, travelling across the roof of the world visiting monasteries that are centuries old and hilltop fortresses that once stood guard over deep valleys.

Visit the ancient Newari Kingdom of Nepal with valleys full of ancient temples, shrines and pagodas, a melting pot of cultures. Majestically sitting between Nepal and Bhutan is the old British hill station of Darjeeling, nestled against the backdrop of the mighty snow clad Himalayan peaks. Ending with the last Himalayan kingdom, is the mysterious, remote and reclusive kingdom of Bhutan, which has started to open its door to the world while maintaining its vibrant traditions.

At a glance...

- Wander the tiny medieval lanes in Kathmandu and its World Heritage Listed sites.
- Experience the majesty of the Himalaya and Mt Everest from the air.
- Relax in the old "Queen of the Hills" Darjeeling
- Enjoy the artisans, museums and markets of Thimphu, the world's only capital city without traffic lights.
- Experience the picturesque Punakha Dzong – coronation site for Bhutan's kings.
- Witness the great Himalayan range, from Nepal to Bhutan, including the world's highest (Everest) and third highest peaks (Kanchenjunga).



Itinerary

Sat 19 March 2016

Australia – Bangkok

Morning departure from Australia on Thai Airways flights to Bangkok. Mid-afternoon arrival at Bangkok International airport. Transfer to the Novotel Bangkok Suvarnabhumi Airport Hotel.

Dinner at the hotel. **D**

Sun 20 Mar

Bangkok – Kathmandu

Transfer to Bangkok airport for an early morning flight to Kathmandu with Thai Airways. After immigration, luggage collection and customs transfer to the hotel in Nepal's capital, Kathmandu.

This afternoon take a short orientation walk to the Royal Palace and the nearby Garden of Dreams for afternoon tea. The Garden, once famous as the Garden of Six Seasons, was created by Field Marshal Kaiser Sumsher Rana in early 1920. Created with an ensemble of pavilions, fountains, decorative furniture with European inspired features such as verandahs, pergolas, balustrades, urns and birdhouses today the garden is smaller in size but still a wonderful oasis in the centre of Kathmandu.

Enjoy Dinner in a local restaurant. **B D**

Mon 21 Mar

Kathmandu

This morning after a short talk on the history of Kathmandu, travel to Bhaktapur 'City of Devotees', an ancient Newar city in the east corner of the Kathmandu Valley. It was the largest of the three Newar kingdoms (the other two being Kathmandu and Patan) and the capital of Nepal during the great "Malla" Kingdom until the second half of the 15th century. Today it is the third largest city in the Kathmandu Valley and has some of the best preserved palace courtyards and pagodas in Nepal.

This afternoon visit to the Boudhanath Stupa, which for centuries has been an important place of pilgrimage and meditation for Tibetan Buddhists & local Nepalis. It is located on what was a major trade route between Nepal and Tibet. Many travelling merchants used it as a resting place. In 1979, Boudha became a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Great Stupa of Boudhanath is the focal point of the district and the local Tibetan and Sherpa community can be seen each morning and evening making a kora or round of the stupa. Lunch at Boudhanath. **B L**



Bodhnath, Kathmandu by Svetlana Grechkina/Flicker

Tue 22 Mar

Kathmandu

Early morning visit to Durbar Square, the central square of Kathmandu and the original capital of the city.

Durbar Square has been the heart of royal rule of the old kingdom of Kathmandu from the 10th century CE and it remains the cultural and architectural heart of the old town. Watching the passing stream of people from the steps of the towering wooden Maju Deval takes you back to the days when this city ruled the broad Kathmandu Valley.

Return to the hotel through the tiny, medieval maze of lanes that were once the commercial lifeblood of the city.

This afternoon enjoy a talk on the history of the climbing of Mt Everest. **B L**

Wed 23 Mar

Haatiban Resort

We rise very early this morning to enjoy a scenic flight over the main Himalayan range and Mount Everest (8848m / 29,028 ft).

Returning to Kathmandu airport drive (1 hr) to the small resort on the rim of the broad Kathmandu Valley which, weather permitting, offers 180 degree views of the main Himalayan Range.

You may wish to spend the rest of the day relaxing on the terrace or undertaking one of the short walks around the resort. **B L D**

Thu 24 Mar

Darjeeling

After breakfast transfer to the airport for a short flight to Bhadrapur, on the eastern border of Nepal and the jumping off point for Darjeeling. From here we drive up into the steep Himalayan hills, a path followed by many a member of the British Raj as they escaped the searing heat of summer on the Indian plains. After a four hour winding drive we arrive in the old "Queen of the Hills", Darjeeling and check into our hotel. **B L D**

Fri 25 Mar

Darjeeling

After a morning talk on Tenzing Norgay and the history of Darjeeling, visit the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, established by Prime Minister Nehru after Tenzing Norgay climbed Everest in 1953 to encourage Indians to take up mountaineering.



Bhaktapur via Wikimedia CC

After lunch walk into the main square (Chowrasta) and a tea tasting at a local tea merchant's store. Darjeeling boasts some of the best tea in the world and here you will learn the subtle differences in the differing varieties. **B D**

Sat 26 Mar Darjeeling

For the early risers take a dawn walk around the Mall for a view of the world's third highest Peak, Kanchenjunga (8,586m / 28,169 ft) as the sun rises. After breakfast visit the first Tibetan refugee centre to be established in India and the place to where the Dalai Lama fled when he left Tibet in 1959. The centre houses a school, a carpet factory and an information centre.

This afternoon is free to wander the town or just sit in Chowrasta and watch the local world go by. **B D**

Sun 27 Mar Darjeeling

Today is free to rest and relax and enjoy the beautiful old Elgin Hotel. Take a walk down to the lower market or just browse the book and curio shops of this old hill town. **B D**

Mon 28 Mar Darjeeling – Bhutan

Departing early morning make the long but beautiful drive down to the plains and across to the tiny border town of Phuntsholing on the India/Bhutan border where we will stay for the night. **B L D**

Tue 29 Mar Phuntsholing – Paro

Today we enter another world as we move up through the quiet and cool forests of lowland Bhutan towards Paro, Bhutan's second largest town. (90 min drive).

This afternoon head for a visit to the great Paro Dzong and the Paro Museum (Ta Dzong) – one of Asia's best. Dzongs are large monastery forts which dominate every major town in Bhutan. They are the administrative and religious centres of the district and were once the mainstay of that districts' defences against invading Tibetans and often, rival Bhutanese clans. Ta Dzong houses a wonderful collection of art, armoury, weaponry and textiles and is a beautifully maintained showcase of Bhutanese history. The evening enjoy a talk on the history of Bhutan and enjoy some Bhutanese hospitality. **B L D**



Mount Everest by shrimpol1967 via Wikimedia CC

Wed 30 Mar Paro

Today head to the far reaches of the Paro valley and the ruined monastery/fortress of Drugyel Dzong. The dzong was destroyed by fire early in the 20th century however for centuries it was Bhutan's first line of defence against invading Tibetan armies.

On the way back from Drugyel stop to view the site of the famous Tiger's Nest, or *Taktsang Monastery* which is perched some 600m. up on a cliff overlooking the Paro valley and is said to be the spot where the legendary Indian saint, Guru Padma Sambhava flew from Tibet on the back of a tiger to defeat five demons who were opposing the spread of Buddhism in Bhutan. This evening enjoy a pre-dinner talk on Buddhism with an emphasis on Mahayana Buddhism. **B L D**

Thu 31 Mar Paro – Thimphu

After breakfast we drive on the main road to Bhutan's bustling capital Thimphu, set in a broad valley at 2,248 meters (7,375 ft). Home of Bhutan's new civil government and the Bhutanese royal family this town boasts some of the kingdom's most spectacular buildings.

On arrival take an orientation walk through the town and discover some hidden gems for shopping and sightseeing. This evening enjoy a pre-dinner talk on modern Bhutan. **B L D**

Fri 01 Apr Thimphu

After a morning talk commence with an exploration of the sites of Thimphu. Visit the Tashichho Dzong, the monastic and civil centre of Bhutan; it is an impressive fortress/monastery that now houses the secretariat building, the throne room of His Majesty the King as well as various government offices.

Visit the National Textile Museum which showcases Bhutan's world class textile arts and the Heritage Museum – a restored mid-19th century traditional farmhouse. **B L D**



Bhaktapur palais fenetres by Royonx via Wikimedia CC

Sat 02 Apr

Thimphu – Punakha

This morning head up from the Thimphu Valley to cross the Dochu La pass (3200m). to Punakha, the old winter capital of Bhutan, Weather permitting we will enjoy panoramic views of the eastern Himalaya, including Bhutan's highest mountain, Gangkar Punsum, 7,570m / 24,836 ft. The road then drops down through lush and varied forest, finally emerging into the highly-cultivated Punakha valley. The great Punakha Dzong, situated at the confluence of two major Himalayan rivers is one of the most magical sights of Bhutan and resting place of Bhutan's first ruler, Shabdrung Nawang Namgyal. **B L D**

Sun 03 Apr

Punakha – Paro

Morning drive back to Paro. The afternoon is free to walk into town or relax at your hotel and soak up the last of Bhutan's magic. For those who wish to try a traditional hot stone bath we can arrange this on this afternoon in Paro.

This evening enjoy a farewell dinner with local dancers and musicians who will offer us songs which are centuries old and reflect the rich artistic traditions still very much alive in Bhutan. **B L D**

Mon 04 Apr

Paro – Bangkok

After breakfast, transfer to Paro airport for a mid-morning flight to Bangkok.

Mid-afternoon arrival at Bangkok International airport. Transfer to the Novotel Bangkok Suvarnabhumi Airport Hotel. **B**

Tue 05 Apr

Bangkok – Sydney

Transfer to Bangkok airport for an early morning flight with Thai Airways.

Evening arrival in Sydney. **B**

Renaissance Tours offers its sympathy to all those affected in the 25/04 Earthquake and condolence to those who have lost their life.

Nepal Tourism Board

Nepal Tourism Board have to look ahead and realize that the task of rebuilding the nation starts now. Tourism is the only key to rebuilding process that will put the world-famous smile back on Nepalese faces.

Nepal Tourism Board wishes to inform all friends of Nepal, both tourists and the global travel industry that, from autumn 2015, Nepal is Open for Business. We look forward to welcoming guests from around the world to our magical country of great beauty and rich cultural diversity.

For those who have already booked travel for autumn season and thereafter, we urge you to continue with your plans.

www.welcomenepal.com/promotional



Golden Gate, Bhaktapur by Till Niermann via Wikimedia CC



Punakha Dzong



Colourful markets of Durbar Square

Tour prices

Per person, twin share	AUD 11,800
Single supplement*	AUD 1,450
Deposit per person	AUD 500
Final payment due	20 January 2016

*Single travellers may request to share. Please advise at time of booking.

Tour code AGI603

Fitness level Moderate
Please see booking conditions for fitness level definitions.

Suggested airline Thai Airways/Druk Air
Thai Airways has connections from Australia to Kathmandu via Bangkok, returning Druk Air Paro to Bangkok.
Please contact Renaissance Tours for current airfares and flight reservations.

Tour price includes

- Accommodation with daily breakfast (B)
- Meals as per itinerary (L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- International flights with Thai Airways Sydney/Bangkok/ Kathmandu and Bangkok/Sydney
- International Flights from Kathmandu/Bagdogra and Paro/ Bangkok
- Everest Mountain flight
- Airline and local taxes, tourism fees and baggage allowance (20Kg)
- Transfers on arrival and departure if travelling on suggested flights
- Comprehensive sightseeing including entrance fees as per itinerary
- Visas for Nepal, India and Bhutan
- Lectures and talks with your tour leader throughout
- Gratuities for local guides and drivers
- Hotel portorage (1 piece per person).

Tour price does not include

- Transfer on arrival and departure if not travelling on suggested/included flights
- Items of a personal nature, including telephone, laundry, mini-bar etc.
- Airport portorage
- Travel insurance

Your hotels*** and ****

Bangkok – Novotel Suvarnabhumi Airport
Kathmandu – Yak & Yeti Hotel
Hattiban – Hattiban Resort
Darjeeling – Elgin Hotel
Phuntsoling – Druk Hotel
Paro – Zhiwaling Resort
Thimpu – Riverview Hotel
Punakha – Meri Peunsum Hotel

NB. Hotels of a similar standard may be substituted



Monks in Bhutan, image courtesy of Joyce Morgan



Darjeeling Tea Gardens, by Anilbharadwaj125 via Wikimedia CC

Terms & Conditions

HOW TO BOOK

Complete, sign and return the Booking Form available from Renaissance Tours with your deposit and page one of your passport.

DEPOSIT / FINAL PAYMENTS

Your deposit is due at the time of booking and is used to pay hotel, airline, performance tickets and/or other deposits. It is non-refundable in the event of your cancellation.

Final payment is due 60 days before departure. Failure to make the final payment by the due date may result in cancellation of your booking and loss of deposit.

Payment by cash, cheque, direct deposit, American Express, MasterCard and Visa is accepted. 1.5% service charge applies to payment made by MasterCard and Visa. 3% service charge applies to payment made by American Express.

Payments for some international airfares can be made by credit card without a service fee. Please check for details.

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS

a) Cancellation by You – Cancellation charges will be applied as shown below, calculated from the day written notification is received by Renaissance Tours. In addition to cancellation fees for tours operated by Renaissance Tours as shown below, airlines, hotels and other third parties may impose up to 100% cancellation charges.

60 days or more	Forfeit of deposit
59 – 45 days	25% of tour cost
44 – 31 days	50% of tour cost
30 – 15 days	75% of tour cost
Less than 15 days	100% of tour cost

The above cancellation charges include applicable GST.

In addition to the above, cancellation charges may apply for additional arrangements booked by Renaissance Tours, such as air tickets, hotels and travel insurance premium. If the reason for cancellation is covered by the insurance policy, you may be able to reclaim these charges.

b) Cancellation by Us – We reserve the right to cancel a tour for any reason (such as failure to reach minimum tour participant numbers). Except for

force majeure, we will not cancel a tour less than 60 days before departure. No further compensation will be paid in the event of cancellation by Renaissance Tours. A full refund of monies paid for tour costs will be the full extent of our liability.

Cancellation and/or amendment fees may apply for additional travel arrangements booked by Renaissance Tours.

PASSPORTS, VISAS AND VACCINATIONS

All travellers must be in a possession of a valid passport – most countries require a 6-month validity from your date of entry or exit. For some countries (e.g. China, Vietnam, India, Russia), visas are included in the tour cost and will be arranged by Renaissance Tours prior to travel. For other countries, it is your responsibility to ensure you have the appropriate visa(s).

You are also responsible for obtaining all necessary inoculations and preventative medicines as may be required for the duration of the tour.

TOUR PRICES

Prices quoted in our tour information are based on exchange rates, cost of services and applicable taxes at the time of publication. Prices may be subject to change in the event of significant currency fluctuations or the introduction of new taxes, up until final payment is received.

In the event of a price increase, whether because of a currency fluctuation, increase in taxes or a correction in advertised prices, we will advise you and you have the option of accepting the amended prices, inclusions and booking conditions or withdrawing from the tour and receiving a full refund of all monies paid.

Once final payment is received, all prices will be guaranteed and no surcharges will apply.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

It is a condition of travel that you are covered by comprehensive travel insurance for international tours. Your travel insurance can be arranged by Renaissance Tours.

FITNESS AND PARTICIPATION

Most of our tours require a MODERATE level of fitness.

However, in certain destinations (e.g. Silk Road, Central Asia, Outback Australia, tropical destinations) or in certain seasons (e.g. mid-winter, mid-summer) or because of the nature of travel (e.g. remote rail), certain tours will require an ABOVE AVERAGE or CHALLENGING level of fitness.

If you (or we) have any doubts about your level of fitness, you may be required to have a doctor's appraisal. This would require your doctor to read the itinerary of your chosen tour, including the fitness level, and provide you (and us) with a written confirmation of your ability to participate.

MODERATE

For the overall benefit of the group, all tour members must possess a moderate level of mobility, including the ability to:

- negotiate airports and railway stations without wheelchair assistance
- use combined shower/bath facilities (it is impossible to guarantee walk-in shower facilities)
- undertake walking tour of 1–2 hours duration, including using stairs, walking over cobblestones and other uneven surfaces
- stand for long periods in museums and other sites
- embark / disembark coaches, trains and other methods of transportation without assistance
- handle your own luggage

ABOVE AVERAGE

In addition to the above, tour members must also be able to:

- undertake walking tours of 2–3 hours
- climb staircases of 100 or more steps

CHALLENGING

In addition to the above, tour members must also be able to:

- handle extremes of temperature (e.g. below 0 or above 35 degrees)
- handle extremes of altitudes (e.g. 4000 metres and above).

You can find the full terms & conditions at www.renaissance-tours.com.au/booking-conditions or we would be happy to post you a copy on request.





Renaissance
Tours

1300 727 095 (AU)

0800 403 621 (NZ)

call (+61 2) 9299 5801

fax (+61 2) 9299 5805

email info@renaissancetours.com.au

visit www.renaissancetours.com.au

Level 4, 47 York Street, Sydney NSW 2000

GPO Box 5068, Sydney NSW 2001

ABN 14 069 591 448

Travel agent