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BHUTAN

**Birding the Land of the Thunder.
Thailand (Spoon-billed Sandpiper) Pre-tour.**

Nov 25 to Dec 11, 2026

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The unique Ibisbill, common in Bhutan.

Alvaro's Adventures is returning to Bhutan. It is a fantastic trip, to watch birds and visit the Himalayas and the distinctive Buddhist culture of Bhutan. We will team up with expert local birding guides to offer an authoritative, yet distinctly fun and informative tour of the birds and natural areas of Bhutan. This promises to be a highlight for any birder interested in seeing one of the most distinctive countries and cultures. We will incorporate some time to visiting temples (Dzongs) and areas of cultural importance.

High in the beautiful and majestic eastern Himalaya, nestled between Tibet and India, is the small Kingdom of Bhutan, increasingly renowned as one of the earth's last precious unspoiled spots. In this magical place, a distinctive Buddhist culture is integrated into every aspect of daily life, and spectacular mountain scenery provides a backdrop to pristine forests and picturesque valleys and gorgeous rivers. The breathtaking landscape is dotted with fluttering prayer flags, colorful farmhouses of distinct Bhutanese architecture, amidst terraced fields and impressive monasteries clinging to impossible cliffs.

Until recently, Bhutan's remoteness, steep terrain, and tightly controlled tourism have ensured that its incredible beauty and fascinating people remained a quiet secret known to only a few. Bhutan was closed to outsiders until 1960; its first roads were built in 1969. Bhutan is the only remaining intact Himalayan Buddhist kingdom.

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Over 70 percent of the country is forested, and unlike other Himalayan countries, most of Bhutan's original forest remains intact. The Buddhist philosophy of respect for all living things, and a progressive government approach to development in which the preservation of the environment and the promotion of Bhutan's unique culture and traditions are key elements, have maintained a healthy environment where wildlife flourishes. As a result, Bhutan lies in an area designated as one of the world's biodiversity hotspots. The amount of forest is astounding!

This shining cultural gem is also a birder's paradise. Its wide altitudinal range—from sub-tropical lowlands to alpine peaks—provides an array of climatic conditions and habitats, from lowland “jungles” to temperate forests and alpine tundra that support over 650 bird species. The diversity of bird life in Bhutan is further augmented by numerous migrating species that pass-through Bhutan on their travels north and south. For these reasons, the Bhutan bird list includes some of the rarest and most sought-after species in the eastern Himalayas.

Thirty-four species of birds classed as threatened or nearly threatened are found in Bhutan, including the Black-necked Crane, Rufous-necked Hornbill, Pallas's Fish Eagle, and the critically endangered White-bellied Heron. Because of Bhutan's progressive forest conservation practices many of these species still thrive in Bhutan and can be found easier here than anywhere else in the world.

Throughout the tour we'll see and occasionally stop to visit the impressive monasteries, dzongs (the monastery/fortresses that serve as Bhutan's administrative and religious centers), lhakhangs (temples), and chortens (stupas) that are important features of Bhutan's religion and culture, both past and present. We will have opportunities to see traditional Bhutanese arts and crafts, which represent an exciting and vital aspect of Bhutan's living heritage and which reflect Bhutan's spiritual and intellectual life.

Note that this is a tour than that encompasses the new road in the south which allows access to some wonderful forest as well as the Bhutanese Lowlands. This will add many interesting species, and new habitats to the tour as compared to the previous tours where we did not go down south.



This is the local subspecies of the White Wagtail, *alboides*, quite a stunner.

Itinerary

Note: We are planning on a one or two-day birding visit in Thailand before our tour.

Pre- Tour

NOTE – a more detailed itinerary for the pre-tour is available.

Day 0. Nov 23, 2026: Arrival in Bangkok, overnight in Bangkok. Dinner and hotel included in tour price.

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Day 1. Nov 24, 2026: Shorebirding, looking for Spoon-billed Sandpiper. Afternoon birding at Kaeng Krachan National Park. Night near Kaeng Krachan National Park.

Day 3. Nov 25, 2026: Birding in Kaeng Krachan National park in the morning. Return to Bangkok in the afternoon.

Main tour

Day 0. Nov 25, 2026: Arrival in Bangkok, overnight in Bangkok. Dinner and hotel included in tour price.

Day 1. Nov 26, 2026: Arrival in Bhutan, Paro area. Bangkok- Bhutan flight in the morning, at this time we expect a flight departure at 6:30 am, arriving in the late morning in Paro. Paro is one of the most beautiful and interesting landings of any of the world's international airports! Once we arrive in Bhutan we will bird around the Paro Valley (7400 feet). Birds to look out for are Ibisbill, maybe the Wallcreeper, along with other more common species. We will make our way to the capital, Thimpu where we will spend the night.

Day 2. Nov 27, 2026: Thimphu area. This morning, we will drive to the northern end of the valley in the morning. We hope to find birds like the gorgeous Fire-tailed Myzornis, Satyr Tragopan, Spotted Nutcracker, sunbirds, etc. Afternoon sightseeing around Thimphu City. Overnight Thimphu.

Day 3. Nov 28, 2026: To Phobjikha Valley via Dochula. En to the Phobjikha Valley we will make some stops for birding. Perhaps today we shall find Green tailed & Mrs. Gould's sunbirds, Bar-throated Siva, Collared Owlet, Maroon Oriole, Black-faced & Chestnut-crowned laughingthrushes, Brown Parrotbill, etc. We will also go by the Dochola pass at 10,100 feet where the main target will be the Fire-tailed Myzornis. Depending on the fitness level of the group, we would go on a birding hike. The trail is all downhill and it would be only about 1.5 miles through rhododendron and magnolia forests. Otherwise, we will bird at the roadside. Night in Phobjikha.

Day 4. Nov 29, 2026: Phobjikha Valley. We will go to the Pele La (La means "pass") at 11400 feet this morning. Here Monal and Blood pheasants as well as the Satyr Trogon are distinct possibilities. Other specialties are Spotted Laughingthrush, Great Parrotbill, Collared Grosbeak, White-winged Grosbeak, White-browed

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Rosefinch, Crimson-browed Finch, Red-headed Bullfinch, etc. In the afternoon we will be in the Phobjikha Valley to see the endangered wintering Black-necked Cranes. This is perhaps the best site in the world to see this rare crane. Night in Phobjikha.

Day 5. Nov 30, 2026: To Tingtibi. The drive through lush green sub-tropical forests teeming with wildlife as we head to Tingtibi is very beautiful. We may be able to spot Golden Langurs very close to the road and so keep your cameras always handy. We will be stopping at Tingtibi for two nights. After Yongkhola, Tingtibe is probably the second most popular birding site in Bhutan. Overnight in Tingtibi.

Day 6. Dec 1, 2026: Tingtibi. Full day birding in and around Tingtibi. The likely birds are White-hooded Babbler, White-bellied Parrotbill, Black-throated Parrotbill, an assortment of warblers, Asian Paradise-Flycatcher, and several species of drongos. We will also look out for Asia's rarest bird – the white-bellied heron. Overnight in Tingtibi.

Day 7. Dec 2, 2026: Tingtibe -Panbang For the next couple of days we will be doing mainly lowland birding. New species for the trip would include the Great Indian Hornbill, Long-tailed Broadbill, and Silver-breasted Broadbill, etc. Overnight Panbang.

Days 8. Dec 3, 2026: Panbang to Nganglam. Today is another interesting day of lowland birding. Today could be a good day to see hornbills as we will hopefully be seeing a variety. There will also be several species of Parakeets, Red-Headed Trogon can be fairly common here. Besides birds, for the next couple of days we should be encountering several troops of the very rare primate, the Golden Langur. Night in Nganglam.

Days 9. Dec 4, 2026: Nganglam – Yongkhola. Today we drive up to Yonkhola birding en route to our destination. During today's drive one of the birds that we will be paying special attention for will be the Blyth's Kingfisher. Overnight Yongkhola.

Day 10. Dec 5, 2026: Yongkhola. The first of two days of birding here. Birding will be concentrated in the morning and the afternoon. The area is very scenic and there will also be time for people just to chill out and see what the local people do. This area is extremely diverse, and one of the best spots to find the Beautiful Nuthatch, among many, many other species. Overnight Yongkhola.

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Day 11. Dec 6, 2026: Yongkhola. The second of two full days of birding here. We will spend the day trying to find the local specialties we have not yet seen, hopefully we can find the Beautiful Nuthatch today if we did not find it yesterday! Overnight Yongkhola.

Day 12. Dec 7, 2026: Yongkhola - Chummey. Ending at the Phrumisngla pass at 12,700 feet, past the Yongkhola region at 6000 feet and all the way to the bottom of the valley at Lingmethang at less than 1000 feet, all in a matter of hours is considered to be one of the best birding drives in all of Asia. During this beautiful drive through pristine high-altitude montane forests and through lovely blossoms of several rhododendron species, we can expect to see of the specular birds of the Himalayas such as the Blood Pheasant, Satyr Tragopan, Monal Pheasant, Ward's Trogon, Rufous-necked Hornbills, several species of laughingthrushes, flycatchers, nuthatches, warblers, tits, etc. Overnight Chumey.

Day 13. Dec 8, 2026: Chummey to Punakha. Today we will drive up to the gorgeous and historic site of Punakha. The white-bellied heron is also frequently sighted at Punakha, if we have not already found this rare species. Punakha is the winter headquarters of the central monastic body, and we will also visit the majestic Dzong. Almost all of Bhutan's most important events in its recent history has taken place in this Dzong (fortress/monastery). It is a wonderful building, in a beautiful setting. Overnight in Punakha.

Day 14. Dec 9, 2026: Punakha to Paro. This is another drive that takes us through great habitat where we will stop and bird en route. There are various passes we will cross today, and if we have not yet seen the Myzornis, we may have another chance today. As well, this is another good chance of see the extremely rare, White-bellied Heron. Because the global population of this bird is estimated to be less than 60 individuals, the Royal Society for the Protection of Nature is constructing a center where they plan to have a captive breeding program.. Overnight Paro.

Day 15. Dec 10, 2026: Paro and the Tiger's Nest. A short drive from our hotel we will rejoin the road towards Thimphu, which you drove through on Day 3. We will drive past Thimphu and to Paro for your last two nights. Upon arrival in Paro, for those keen we will hike to the iconic Tiger's nest monastery. It is a two-hour uphill hike and another 90 minutes or so on the return, one can also hike part of the way up, or avoid the hike altogether. The Tiger's Nest is a fantastic site, one of the iconic visits of Bhutan but it is a tough hike! Note that the hike is optional. Overnight Paro.

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Day 16. Dec 11, 2026: Depart Bhutan. Transfer to airport and fly to Bangkok. It is possible that we will arrive approximately at 5 – 6 pm this afternoon. Once confirmed, some may choose to book the international flight out of Thailand tonight at least 3 hours after our expected return from Paro. For those who choose to remain the night in Thailand, we have not included the cost of hotel/food for this evening but can book an extra hotel night for you at the airport hotel in Bangkok.



Green-backed Tit, a close relative of the Great Tit.

About the Physical Requirements & Pace

Our plan is to see a wide cross section of the birds of Bhutan, with efforts to find some of the regional specialties, while also taking in the grandeur of the physical beauty of this country as well as the cultural heritage of the kingdom. This is a land of immeasurable beauty, a place where people live in harmony and are said to be truly happy. We want to be happy too! We realize that some of the birding will be in higher elevations, and we shall take it easy during these days. In higher areas, we do come

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down to lower elevations to sleep, but there will be some nights when we will be sleeping above 9000 feet. Most nights we will be sleeping much lower than this. Note that we will be starting the days early to be able to take in the best hours of morning birding and may have great leisurely picnic lunches prepared by our field team, although typically we will not be in a situation where we can head back to the hotel for an afternoon siesta.

Roads in the western part of Bhutan are quite good, in the East the roads have been recently paved. Road construction was an issue for some years in the country, but the work appears to have been finished at this time. Still, these are mountain roads, so be aware that windy roads are something we will encounter on a daily basis. Note that many drives are long as distances are not that great in Bhutan, but roads are windy and slow. We will stop to bird, and take breaks, but longer drives are one of the realities of this tour on certain. As much of the forest is accessible by the road, and traffic is minimal, stopping on drives to bird is a great way to make the trips much more enjoyable.

We will be staying at multiple comfortable local hotels, clean with en suite bathrooms and hot water. Hotels can be simple, yet clean and safe. You do not go to Bhutan to find international style big hotels, this is a country of small inns, and family run outfits. Being out in the field, away from the noise of the city, eating a great lunch while the birds sing, and we chat and enjoy great company – these will in fact be highlights of this fascinating and unique tour. Much of our birding will be from roads, and usually we will try to bird while walking downhill. There are very few trails we visit in Bhutan; road birding is quiet and traffic-free much of the time. Forest in Bhutan is adjacent to the road, and most easy to access in this way. In Bhutan food is tasty but simple, often curries, and red rice. There are vegetarian options readily available. The hot “chilly cheese” that Bhutanese add to the food for spice is always available if you are keen on trying it. Note that due to the homogenous culture of Bhutan, and their tendency to offer local food rather than international fare, food can be a bit repetitive. Yet it is healthy and tasty.

If you choose to do the hike to the Tiger's Nest at the end of our tour, it is a hike of a couple of hours (at least) non-stop to reach the temple, and an hour and a half to return. It is somewhat strenuous for those who may not be used to longer hikes with an elevation gain. Even for the fit, this is a long hike which is doable by most folks if one takes it at a comfortable pace. You may be a bit sore or stiff the next day after the hike. Keep in mind either way, that it is long and may not be for everyone. Do know that half way up is a restaurant and chai/coffee stop. If the hike is too much, one can remain here and not go to the top. The hike is entirely optional, and we will have a separate outing for those who do not want to go to Tiger's Nest.

Separate from the Tiger's Nest, we may also take at least one downhill hike through a forest trail, a hike of 1.5 miles or so. It is a walk that can be skipped if you are not up to

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it. In some cases we may not have time for this hike. Otherwise, the birding is pretty relaxed and from level surfaces and from roads.



Birding in Bhutan.

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Himalayan Monal - a real "wow" bird.

Your Guides

Peter Burke is a well-known Canadian birder, artist, and author who started birding more than 40 years ago. Peter is widely known as one of the most affable guides out



there, with an upbeat and accessible personality. His great sense of humor and amazing knowledge of birds makes for a fun, and very informative tour. He devotes much of his time to illustrating and works as a biological consultant. He has co-authored various articles on bird identification and biology and served as chair on the Ontario Bird Records Committee. Peter has birded extensively throughout Canada and much of the US and has traveled abroad to Andean

South America, Papua New Guinea, Cuba, Trinidad, and much of Central America. He is an accomplished artist as is evident from his work in the identification and biology of

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the New World Blackbirds (Jaramillo and Burke, Princeton University Press), several editions of the National Geographic Society's Birds of North America (J. Dunn), and Birds of Chile (A. Jaramillo, P. Burke, D. Beadle). He is also a contributing artist to the Birds of Peru (T. Schulenberg et. al.) and the upcoming three volume series Birds of Brazil (B. Whitney et. al.). His most recent work includes illustrations in The Peterson Field Guide to the Birds of Northern Central America (Fagan and Komar 2016). Recently Peter has been leading the Bhutan, Cuba, Thailand, and Bolivia tours for Alvaro's Adventures. Peter is actively working on the conservation of Kirtland's Warbler in Canada, and is a lead on that project collaborating with international conservationists.



Local Guides – The trip will be co-led by a world class expert Bhutanese guide, with years of experience (Sonam Dorjee).

Sometimes we may also have a second local guide, as well as our driver who is also well versed in birds and nature.

Sonam Dorjee is an avid birder and one of the lead birdwatching guides for Bhutan Birding and Heritage Travels. Sonam started his career as a member of the Bhutan Birding and Heritage Travels support staff team in 2006. However, his passion for birding meant that he

was serving as the assistant to the company's lead birder – Hishey Tshering – by early 2007. By mid-2008, Sonam had quickly progressed through the ranks and was leading birdwatching tours all by himself. Since then, he has established himself as one of the premier birding guides in not only the company but in the whole of Bhutan itself. Sonam has led many birdwatching tours over the years, and he has birded extensively throughout Bhutan. Besides leading birdwatching tours, Sonam has also been on numerous cultural and trekking tours. Sonam's passions – other than birdwatching – include photography and working on his parent's farm in his free time. Sonam currently lives in Paro on his parent's farm. He is married and has two kids.

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Breakfast time in Bhutan.

Financial Information

Note that Bhutan manages tourism in a manner that maintains harmony with their national quest to promote happiness and a healthy environment. Total numbers of visitors to the country are controlled, and all visitors work through local tour operators that charge a minimum per day tourism use fee for their services, part of which goes to the government to fund various programs in Bhutan. This makes Bhutan more expensive than adjacent countries, but it is a nation that cares for its culture, its people and its environment. The financial benefits of this controlled tourism, with an emphasis on ecotourism, go directly to the people, environment and preservation of Bhutanese culture. Few people in the world see this country and its birds, it is a gem, and a distinctly rare opportunity to be able to be a guest here.

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FEE: \$8950 (Credit Card), \$8700 (discount for bank transfer payments). Starts and ends in Bangkok. Price includes return flights from Bangkok to Paro, Bhutan (approximately \$950 cost). Price includes Bhutan government tourism daily fee.

DEPOSIT: \$1000 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: July 29, 2026

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$900

LIMIT: 12. Minimum 4 (small group surcharge of \$600 for groups under 6).



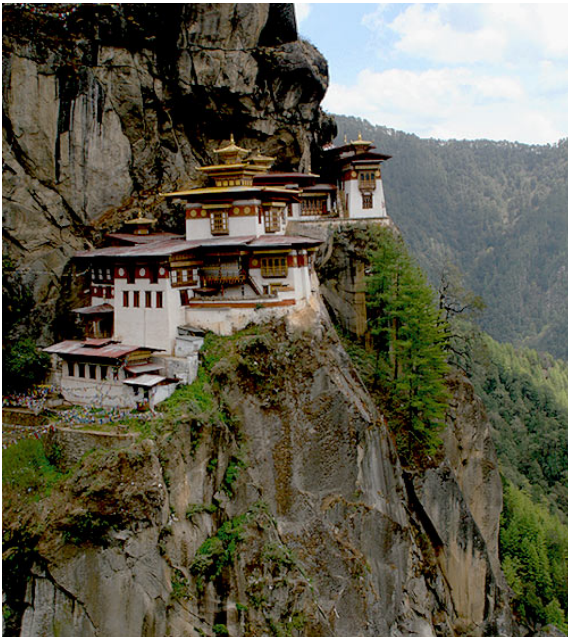
Black-chinned Yuhina.

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Golden-throated Barbet.



Additional Information

DOCUMENTS: A current passport valid six months beyond the date of your return is necessary for US citizens to enter Bhutan. All visitors (other than from a few select countries) to Bhutan require a tourist visa. We, along with the help of our colleagues, will help procure a visa for you. If you are not a US citizen, please check with the Bhutanese consulate nearest you for entry requirements. Information about consulates and entry requirements is generally available online or phone or e-mail. Passports should have an adequate number of blank pages for the entire journey.

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AIR ARRANGEMENTS: Please plan to arrive in Bangkok by Nov 25, 2026, we will overnight there (Hotel night included in tour fee) and be ready for our morning flight to Paro on the 26. Flights back home at the end of the tour can be booked out of Bangkok at night on Dec 11, or for the following day (we expect to be back in Bangkok by 5 – 6 pm). Just to be clear, we will be returning to Bangkok on the 11th in the afternoon, so only a night flight out of Bangkok will work on this date, and that assumes there is no delay out of Paro. If you require hotel at the airport on the 11, we can arrange this for you. Be sure to check with Alvaro's Adventures to confirm that the flights you have chosen will work with our itinerary and to confirm that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. Once purchased, most airline tickets are non-refundable and carry a penalty to change. We are not responsible for these fees.

TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The tour fee is \$8700 for one person in double occupancy starting in Bangkok. It includes all lodging from Day 0 through Day 15, this includes the hotel night in Bangkok on November 25. All meals from Dinner in Bangkok on Day 0 through breakfast on Day 16 are included, as return arrival in Bangkok will vary, no meals are included on the day we are back in Bangkok. Also included are all ground transportation, Bangkok to Paro flight, entrance fees, tips for baggage handling and meal service, and the guide services of the tour leaders. Alcoholic beverages and items of a personal nature are not included. The above fees do not include your airfare to and from Bangkok, airport taxes, visa fees, optional tips to local drivers and guides, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The single supplement for the tour is \$900. If you do not have a roommate but wish to share, we will try to pair you with a roommate from the tour; but if none is available, you will be billed for the single supplement. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, complete the enclosed Registration/Release and Indemnity form and return it with a **deposit of \$1000** per person. If registering by phone, a deposit and the Release and Indemnity form must be received within fourteen days, or the space will be released. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to departure, or **by July 29, 2026. We will bill you for the final payment at either 120 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.** Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by Alvaro's Adventures.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refund of deposit and payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 120 days before departure. If cancellation occurs

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between 119 and 70 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable.

This policy only applies to payments made to Alvaro's Adventures for tour (and any services included in those fees). Airline tickets not included in the tour fee and purchased separately often carry penalties for cancellation or change, or are sometimes totally non-refundable. Additionally, if you take out trip insurance the cost of the insurance is not refundable so it is best to purchase the policy just prior to making full payment for the tour or at the time you purchase airline tickets, depending upon the airlines restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute another guide for the original one. Where this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members, and they will have the right to cancel their participation and receive a full refund.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE: We strongly recommend you consider purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a trip. Because we must remit early (and substantial) tour deposits to our suppliers, we cannot offer any refund when cancellation occurs within 70 days of departure, and only a partial refund from 70 to 119 days prior to departure (see CANCELLATION POLICY). In addition, the Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. US medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Furthermore, US Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur.

RESPONSIBILITY: For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Alvaro's Adventures, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and

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contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the reverse side of the registration form. Alvaro's Adventures acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. Alvaro's Adventures accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Alvaro's Adventures reserves the right to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Alvaro's Adventures reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

Participants should be in good health and should consult a physician before undertaking a tour. If you have questions about the physical requirements of a tour, please contact our office for further information. Participants should prepare for the tour by reading the detailed itinerary, and other pertinent matter provided by Alvaro's Adventures. Each participant is responsible for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment as recommended in our bulletins.

THE RECEIPT OF YOUR TOUR DEPOSIT SHALL BE DEEMED TO BE CONSENT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS. EACH TOUR PARTICIPANT AND EACH PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF A TOUR PARTICIPANT WHO IS UNDER 18 SHALL SIGN AND DELIVER THE RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION.

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One of the most fantastic buildings you will ever see, Punakha Dzong.