



Eastern Textiles of Bhutan:  
A Weaver's Journey  
November 18-28, 2012



Winter is a time of weaving and Eastern women are Bhutan's most celebrated weavers. Explore the remote Eastern reaches of Bhutan where shuttles and looms make daily music and cloth is considered precious. Set in the astonishing landscape of the Himalayas, Bhutan's Eastern Sharchop people's generous and fun loving ways will warmly welcome you. Attend a traditional, colorful sacred festival in Mongar. Overnight in a weaver's farmhouse in the village of Khoma. Experiment with vegetable dyes in Radi. Our guides from the East have deep knowledge of their local language, textile traditions and culture.



**Day 1 : Guwahati, India drive to Samdrup Jongkhar, Bhutan : 3 to 4 hours / 110 kilometers** Leave Guwahati's International Airport, drive through the colorful city of Guwahati and along Assam's plains and enter Bhutan at Samdrup Jongkar. Overnight.



**Day 2: Samdrup Jongkhar to Khaling Weaving Centre to Tashigang 6 to 7 hours / 180 kilometers** After breakfast, your journey into Bhutan begins with a gentle climb up the valley to Deothang once a technical engineering collage, now it has moved to Puntsholing. Next stop along our way is Wamrong, subdistrict headed by Drungpa. Soon we'll reach Khaling and Sherubtshe Collage . Khaling National Handloom Development Project is one of several royal government initiatives to stimulate weaving as a national art and a source of livelihood for women. Wild silk yarn imported from Assam is dyed with vegetable colors and synthetic dyes. Khaling silk is sought after by Thimphu women for their own weavings. On to the small eastern town of Tashigang, home to the Sharshop peoples where we overnight.



**Day 3 : Tashigang to Mongar: 4 to 5 hours / 123 kilometers.** An early morning visit to Tashigang Dzong , a beautiful monastic fortress built in 1667 that overlooks Drangme and Gamri rivers. Afterwards drive through chir pines up the "Yadi Loops" a series of switchbacks to Korila Pass , altitude 7,752ft where we'll stop to catch the clear crisp air and hear the flutter of prayer flags. Drop again through rhododendrons and blue pines to arrive in Mongar. Overnight .



**Day 4. Mongar to Lhuentse to Khurbazam, 76 kilometers 3 hrs drive. Hike to Khoma village: 2 hrs. Home stay** Drive to Lhuentse, the original home of Bhutan's royal family in the remote and ancient region of Kurtoe. It's a dramatic trip along side cliffs above a river valley . Visit Lhuentse Dzong built in 1600's. We'll take a gentle hike, about 2 hours, from Khurbazam to Khoma village where "kushutara" or brocaded dress weavers practice their intricate art. Almost all 30 houses in the village have backstrap looms. Motifs are created by four supplementary wefts interworked around the warp elements so that they appear to ride the surface of the cloth like embroidery. Spend the night in a local weaver's home and experience the tradition of kind Bhutanese hospitality.



**Day 5: Hike to Lhuentse , drive to Mongar**  
2 hour hike, 76 kilometers 3 hrs drive  
Breakfast in the village and a leisurely hike out and return to Mongar. Afternoon to relax. Delicious local food and hot showers await us in Mongar Hotel.



### **Day 6 Mongar Tsechu (Festival)**

A highlight of the tour will be Mongar's annual local festival. Mingle with Eastern Bhutanese people in Mongar to intimately share and appreciate their culture and sacred ceremonies. Bhutanese love to socialize, joke, play and consume betel-nut and alcohol which helps them join in the spirit of the celebration. Family picnics cover the festival grounds. Amid a swirl of color, to commemorate Guru Rinpoche's great deeds, religious dances are performed by monks and laymen dressed in religious costumes and masks. Local Bhutanese attend with the most joyous of spirits. You'll see beautiful weavings as women wear their finest kiras and men their best ghos.



### **Day 7 Mongar to Tashigang via Gomphu Kora .**

Continuing East to reach Tashigang, drive through Korila Pass and Yadi. Today's drive climbs gradually with scenic views of scattered villages, winding up through rhododendrons and blue pine forests up again to Kori La pass, altitude 7,752 ft. then back through the Yadi Loops to Tashigang. Short side trip to visit historical site of Gomphu Kora, and continue towards Tashigang. Rest and overnight.



### **Day 8 Tashigang to Ramjar village**

Today we'll take a one hour drive to the village of Ramjar, a small Sharshop village. Home of Sacred Himalaya Travel's family and friends we'll be warmly welcomed into our simple, traditional house to overnight. While there we may help brew Ara, the local rice whiskey, or cook a delicious batch of Zao, puffed fried rice served traditionally with butter tea. Visit our weaving friends up the hill to more deeply understand local textile skills and techniques. Overnight and wake to the calls of laughing thrush.



### **Day 9. Ramjar to Rangjung; visit Radhi : Raw silk weavers and vegetable dyes .**

#### **Overnight at Rangjung Monastery . 16 km / 45 minutes**

Travel to Rangjung, After checking into the Guesthouse at the Rangjung Monastery, we'll have refreshments then drive to Radhi village around 1/2 hr drive to the upper village. We can see lots of raw silk weaving (Bura) as Radhi is famous for producing beautiful supplementary warp patterned fabrics or "aikapur" and Raw silk " bura "the most popular, prestigious textiles made in NE Bhutan. Woven of cotton, wild silk or cultivated silk in five color combinations these textiles are so admired weavers who knew this technique were once retained by noble households. Prized for generations aikapur cloth has been saved for special occasions. If possible, with the help of local weavers, experiment with vegetable dyes. In the evening, around 5pm, back to the Guest house to attend the evening prayers and chanting of monks at the monastery. Overnight at the Guest house is very quiet and pleasant.



**Day 10 Rangjung via Tashigang to Samdrup Jongkhar**  
**6 to 7 hours / 180 kilometers**

Next day we'll drive from Rangjung to Samdrup Jongkhar via Tashigang. Rangjung to Tashigang is 16 km. . Leaving Tashigang, drive alongside Drangme Chhu river to Cha Zam, to arrive at Gomkora, a lovely small lhakhang tucked in a river valley. Gomkora , a sacred meditation site of Guru Rimpoche, Bhutan's beloved 8th century saint who introduced Nyingma Buddhism to Bhutan. He meditated here and left a body impression on a rock in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Onward drive to Samdrup Jongkhar to overnight..



**Day 11. Samdrup Jongkhar to Guwahti. Fly to Bangkok.**  
**3 to 4 hours /110 kilometers.**

After breakfast , leave Bhutan to drive along Assam's plains to the colorful city of Guwahati, India . After lunch arrive to Guwahati's International Airport for your onward destinations. We hope you'll carry this gentle kingdom in your heart . May it bring peace to you and others. Have a safe journey home.



TASHI DELEK

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