



**PILGRIMAGE TO  
GOMPHU KORA, OMBA NYE,  
RIGSUM GOENPA AND CHORTEN KORA**  
*Eastern Bhutan*

*30th October — 8th November, 2011*

## DAY 1 (OCTOBER 30, 2011 SUNDAY)

Travel from Thimphu to Bumthang (Central Bhutan) a holy place where one can visit many ancient holy temples like Kurje and Jampa Lhakhang including Jakar Dzong-Halt in Bumthang



*Jakar Dzong*



*Kurje Lhakhang*



*Jampa Lhakhang*

Accommodation: There are plenty of international standard hotels like Yee Garling, Rinchenling Resort, Wangdicholing Resort and Hotel Home etc.



## DAY 2 (OCTOBER 31, 2011 MONDAY)

Travel from Bumthang to Gom Kora in Tashiyangtse in Eastern Bhutan. Some of the notable features of Tashi-



*Gomphu Kora*

yangtse are the sacred monuments and historical sites like Chorten Kora, Gom Kora, and Omba Ney and Rigsum Goenpa beside the fact that it served as roosting grounds for the black-necked cranes in winter.

Around 13kms beyond Chazam (22km from Trashigang) on the road to Yangtse is an extraordinarily picturesque temple, just below the road, surrounded by terraced rice fields, called Gom Kora or actually Gomphu Kora (Gomphu meaning Mediation Place and Kora means Circumambulation). Guru Rinpoche meditated here and left a body impression on the rock. It is believed that Guru Rinpoche subdued an evil dragon here crushing it into the rock leaving impressions of the dragon's body and his hat. Guru Rinpoche also hide a Tshebum or vase containing the water of immortality inside the rock. Pilgrims may be fortunate to have opportunity to taste the water if it trickles out of the rock when they visit. The temple was built here in 17th century by Minjur Tempa, above the large rock with meditation cave underneath. There are many relics inside this two-storey temple and the murals



are said to date from its original construction period. The pilgrims revere it as a sacred power place and circumambulate the meditation cave. The pathway around the cave includes a narrow, twisting passageway through which pilgrims crawl and wiggle to test their negative past actions. In March/April, a three-day festival is held here, which is quite unique from other Tsechu around Bhutan. Pilgrims circumambulate the Goemba around the large rock throughout the night during the festival. Many nomadic tribes from Merak and Sakten also come here during this period and for many of whom, the evening event results in marriages.

Accommodation: There are no hotels or guest houses since the Temple is isolated from any settlement nearby. Therefore, all pilgrims will be putting up in tents.

*Pilgrims try their luck to climb a sacred rock*

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## DAY 3 (NOVEMBER 1, 2011 TUESDAY)

Spend half a day or more doing Ney Khor and Tshokhor in Gom Kora followed by Teaching by His Eminence in the afternoon. Later in the evening drive to Kheney.

Halt at Kheney Primary School



*Tshokhor*



*Butter lamps*

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## DAY 4 (NOVEMBER 2, 2011 WEDNESDAY)

Travel to Omba Ney and Ney Khor and Tshokhor in Omba Ney. Later in the evening return to Kheney Primary School. (There is no proper site to camp therefore; pilgrims are expected to return to base camp).

The letter “Om” is located in Ombha Ney which means the sacred place of hidden “Om” in Tashiyangtse dzongkhag. Guru Rinpoche visited Bhutan in the 8th century to subdue the demons and spread the Buddha Dharma. Bhutanese believe that there is not even a horse’s hoof size of land area in Bhutan where Guru Rinpoche did not visit to bless. Three sacred places widely considered sacred and blessed by Guru Rinpoche are Ombha Ney, Aaja Ney and Hungrel. These places became sacred and important religious sites as the three sacred letters “Om Aa Hung” were found imprinted into rock surface there. “Om” refers to wisdom body; “Aa” refers to wisdom speech and “Hung” for wisdom mind.

Since Terton Pema Lingpa visited in the early 15th Century, people from far and near visit the place annually on pilgrimage.

The letter “Om” is visible on the rock surface if you watch carefully from a distance about 7 yards. If you draw closer you cannot see.

The “Aa” is located in “Aaja” in Mongar dzongkhag. “Aaja” means hundred numbers of letters “Aa” which is visible on rock surface in Aaja Ney.

The letter “Hung” could be viewed at Hungrel in Paro, which is located below Rinpong Dzong. Buddhist believes that visiting such sacred places will purify our minds and rinse away the sins committed by our physical actions. Therefore, it is obligatory to visit the places as and when we are able to walk and travel.

**Accommodation:** Camp (Tents)

## DAY 5 (NOVEMBER 3, 2011 THURSDAY)

Travel from Kheney to Bumdeling. On the way visit Chorten Kora and Dechen Phodrang. (Roosting grounds for the black-necked cranes). Pilgrims can drive till Bumdeling.

On the way to Bumdelling, visit Chorten Kora near Tashiyangtse town.

Chorten Kora was built by Lama Ngawang Loday in 1740 AD in memory of his late uncle, Jungshu Pesan and also to subdue a demon that lived where the Chorten stands now. It is believed to have taken 12 years to construct the chorten which was then consecrated by the 13th chief Abbot of Bhutan Je Sherub Wangchuk. Chorten Kora is believed to be a replica of the Boudhnath stupa in Nepal. Though not as large as Boudhnath, the temple is considered one of the most important historical Buddhist structures with an equally rich history behind its origins.



*Chorten Kora, Trashi Yangtse*

The founder of the Temple, Lama Ngawang Loday and his friend Lama Zangpo from Tawang, personally visited the temple in Nepal, and they brought back the model of the Boudhnath stupa carved on a radish. Lama Zangpo constructed a chorten at Pangchanang valley in Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh in India, which is known as Gorzam chorten today. Lama Ngawang Loday constructed the chorten in Trashiyangtse valley and was called Duerong chorten. It was built so that pilgrims could visit the temple in Trashiyangtse instead of making a trip to Nepal. It is believed that the stupa is not an exact replica of the Boudhnath stupa as the radish shrunk during the trip and distorted the carving a bit.

Another legend states that a young girl from Tawang, believed to have been a Khando (Dakini) agreed to be buried alive inside the Chorten. For this reason a ritual known as Dakpa Kora is organized every year where hundreds of people from Arunachal Pradesh known as the Dakpas make it to Chorten Kora to circumambulate and partake in the ritual festivities.

Dakpa Kora is held on the 15th day of the 3rd month according to the Bhutanese calendar and Drukpa Kora (circumbulation by the Bhutanese) is held on the 30th day of the same month every year.

## DAY 6 (NOVEMBER 4, 2011 FRIDAY)

Travel from Bumdeling to Rigsum Goenpa. (3-4 hours walk to Rigsum Goenpa),



*Rigsum Goenpa*

The Rigsum Goenpa in Tashiyangtse is more than 300-year old. Regarded as one of the most sacred monuments in eastern Bhutan the Rigsum Goenpa was completely reconstructed at the cost of Nu 15.5 million and consecrated by His Holiness the present Je Khenpo. Located at an altitude of about 2,500-3,000 meters above sea level, the Goenpa is a seven-hour walk along a mountain trail from Bumdelling and was founded in the 18th century by Lam Tshering Gyamtsho, a close disciple of the 9th Je Khenpo Shacha Rinchen.

Lam Tshering Gyamtsho was succeeded by his spiritual heir Lam Jangchub Gyeltshen who renovated and extended the present-day Lhakhang just below the Rigsum Goenpa monastery with the unique mural paintings of the Zepa Chuni or the twelve depictions of the life and deeds of Lord Buddha which can still be seen today. The temple was named Rig Sum Goenpa.

He was succeeded by his nephew Lam Ngawang Loday who was ordained as the 3rd abbot of Rigsum goenpa monastery by His Holiness Yonten Thaye, the 13th Je Khenpo (1771-1775), who visited the region enroute to Tsari Rongkor (mountain pilgrimage) in Arunachal Pradesh, India.

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Lam Ngawang Loday constructed the bigger Lhakhang just above the lower lhakhang and installed valuable Ku-Sung-Thukten (sacred artifacts representing the body, mind and speech of the Lord Buddha) including the statue of Jowo Shacha Muni, 100 volumes of Kanjur, Gyalse Tenzin Rabgay's arts and crafts, and the enlightening stupas of Lord Buddha.



*As seen in the courtyard of Rigsum Goenpa*



*Relic*



*Ecology diversity on the way to Rigsum Goenpa*

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### **Day 7 (November 5, 2011 SATURDAY)**

Ney Khor, Tshokhor and Teaching in Rigsum Goenpa. (HALT)

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### **DAY 8 (NOVEMBER 6, 2011 SUNDAY)**

Travel from Rigsum Goenpa to Mongar/Tashigang.

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### **DAY 9 (NOVEMBER 7, 2011 MONDAY)**

Mongar/Tashigang to Bumthang

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### **DAY 10 (NOVEMBER 8, 2011 TUESDAY)**

Last grand Tshokhor at Kurjey/Jampa Lhakhang  
Bumthang to Thimphu

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