

Just Awesome - Bhutan 2010

Mystical Land of the Thunder Dragon

Eastern Bhutan – The Other Side

Fasten your seat belts & prepare your self for the ride of a lifetime. What seat belts? We had an exhilarating drive with cliff hugging roads, sheer drops, no barriers & endless twists & turns. Although we thought we were doing 100kph/hr as John & I spent half the trip air borne, gripping onto the handles with whitened knuckles. Wanda assures us we didn't get over 30kph or get out of 3rd gear!! It took us 12 hrs to do 260kms. The Thrumshing La peaking at 3750 metres was covered in mist & we experienced mist floating through the van as two Tsherings hung out the window for better visibility. The descent from Thrumshing La to Lingmithany is astonishing, the road drops from 3750 meters to 650 meters in only a few hours, passing from pine forest to semi tropical forest. Carved out of the side of the mountain, in parts the roadside borders a sheer cliff which drops thousands of feet. We arrived at the basic monastery guesthouse in Rangung after an eventful day.



Next day was a slow pleasant walk to the chorten & then around Rangjung visiting a school, where we all enjoyed a lunch break & interaction with the students. Trashigang is the most eastern point of the highway, & has had little exposure to tourist. On the road from Trashigang to Trashi Yangtse is an extraordinarily picturesque temple called Gom Kora, behind the temple is a large black rock. It is said Guru Rinpoche meditated in the cave, in the rock you can see the impression of his thumb, hand & body. Every spring people come from all over Eastern Bhutan & circumbulate the temple & rock throughout the night. It is said anyone who can climb the rock summit will be forgiven all their sins, given the steepness of the rock I don't think it happens too often. We soon became accustomed to the beautiful endless valleys with house & villages scattered high upon them.



Trashi Yangtse is a small pretty quiet town, just below the town is Chorten Kora, it is 1 of 2 huge chortens in Bhutan done with the Nepalese 'eye' style. The accommodation was basic with an interesting shower & plumbing. Tshering (T2) our driver organized his sister to make arra with milk curd, an interesting lumpy beverage.



Along the valley to Bumberling we experienced the generous nature of several Bhutanese, we were welcomed into the home a family who had a basic paper making factory & given morning tea, later showing us their private temple. We climbed steep terraces amongst the rice fields to watch teams of men & women manually dig the soil as they sang & laughed turning over huge clumps of dirt.



Just Awesome - Bhutan 2010

Mystical Land of the Thunder Dragon Eastern Bhutan – The Other Side

We were invited into T2 sister's house, this time to sample arra with butter & egg, a much smoother beverage, some continued to ingest the potent arra at dinner & regretted it the next day. These simple spontaneous acts left us with fond memories of the Bhutanese.



On the way back to Mongar we called into the home of another of T2 family, who had prepared a beautiful lunch for us. The fried cheese was to die for. Mongar provide a challenge of finding wine for happy hour, Wanda hunted down an interesting bottle of sweet wine, and unfortunately we didn't have Les to finish it.

On the road back to Bunthang we stopped frequently, to look & be entertained by monkeys, view magnificent waterfalls & scenery. Back in Bumthang, we enjoyed more comfortable accommodation & had our only rainy day, stopping us from partaking in a strenuous hike.



Thimphu gave us a chance to shop & stay at the most beautiful hotel with exquisitely carved furniture. Next day we embarked on a beautiful walk to Tango monastery, John huffed and puffed, sighing frequently on the way but really enjoyed the reward of the view! We continued back to Paro to be reunited with the trekkers & exchange stories.

We continued the happy hour tradition throughout the east, & filled in traveling time singing *Waltzing Matilda* & our own version of *come to Bhutan*. I'm sure anyone who was at our spontaneous concert in Thimphu wouldn't forget it!! But we had lots of fun putting it together.

