

# Happiness in the Land of Happiness

A Bhutan experience with  
Stephanie Dowrick &  
William Suganda

19 OCTOBER –  
1 NOVEMBER 2014



inspired  
traveller

*The monks and nuns of Bhutan “don’t try to grasp the divine reality with their minds, but they do experience the divine reality. We Westerners try and grasp the infinite reality with our finite minds, through finite concepts. Impossible; no finite word, concept, image can express an Infinite reality.”*

William Joseph Mackey, SJ, a Jesuit priest who has spent half his life in Bhutan







# Overview

## HAPPINESS IN THE LAND OF HAPPINESS: BACKGROUND AND HIGHLIGHTS

As the world becomes smaller and more intensely travelled, few countries can offer an experience magical enough to take you far beyond the everyday. The Kingdom of Bhutan is such a place. In fact, many call it, with awe and accuracy, “the last Shangri-la”. At the eastern end of the Himalayas, bordered by China, Sikkim and India, Bhutan is famed as the land of happiness, a nation where spirituality lives and where the quality of life is measured in wellbeing, peace between people and kindness. It is also a nation where the pristine physical environment echoes a profound sense of the sacred as people live through their daily choices in harmony with the land.

### Highlights of the Bhutan experience will include:

- Extended stays in Paro, Thimphu and Punakha with hand-picked, exceptionally comfortable accommodation in each centre.
- The full-time services of an excellent local guide, private bus and driver, in addition to the leadership of William Suganda and workshops with Stephanie Dowrick.
- Exploring Punakha Dzong, an historic 17th-century fortress situated auspiciously where two rivers representing the male and female energies meet. This Dzong is regarded as Bhutan's most beautiful.
- Trekking to Taktshang Goemba monastery, “Tiger's Nest”, a famed monastery perched on a cliff 900 metres above a pine forest overlooking Paro valley, renowned for its sacred atmosphere generated by countless years of meditation for peace and compassion in our world.
- Viewing dramatic sacred art, murals and frescoes in each centre.
- Enjoying the mountain scenery of a country described by some as “heaven on earth”. (The tour includes maximum opportunities to explore by foot.)
- Experiencing local customs and kindness in the company of our Bhutanese guide and driver.
- Five inspirational morning workshops with Dr Stephanie Dowrick drawing on Buddhist teachings on happiness (contentment, peace of mind, joy), Bhutanese customs and philosophies, and their practical application in contemporary life.
- Optional meditation (with Stephanie) and morning exercises inspired by Tai Chi (with William) wherever practical.

## WHO WOULD ENJOY AND BENEFIT FROM THIS TOUR?

Travel is a perfect way to leave behind the familiar and explore new and refreshing experiences, both inward and outward. Travelling with a small group brings you a high level of security, as well as the stimulation and depth of experience that comes with good company, especially when you are sharing your discoveries in a country as inspiring as Bhutan.

To participate comfortably, you will need to be able to travel on unsealed roads in our private bus (with low speed limits for additional safety) and also be able to travel fairly effortlessly on foot to key places of interest. We are asking that all participants are fit enough to walk and stand for several hours most days. Monasteries have fairly steep steps and uneven surfaces. Visiting Taktshang Goemba monastery (“Tiger's Nest”), for example, will require a day's hike (return)

commencing at 2600 metres. Most valleys we are visiting will be under 2500 metres and travellers should not encounter altitude sickness. However, do consult your medical practitioner for advice. We also recommend that you bring a hiker's stick (or two) if that will increase your walking comfort.

Travel in a group also requires a fair degree of emotional “fitness”. There are times when the needs of the group must prevail. For example, it is important to be confident that you can be prompt when that's required, listen respectfully to others and observe their needs, and keep up readily with the group when we are involved in shared activities. We believe the benefits of group travel are immense and have seen how life-long friendships can be generated by these heartfelt shared experiences.

# Tour Leaders

## DR STEPHANIE DOWRICK

Dr Stephanie Dowrick is the author of *Seeking the Sacred* and *Choosing Happiness*, as well as other life-changing best-selling books. On this tour – as we outwardly explore this ancient culture, its land, temples and people – Stephanie will bring to life Buddhism’s most meaningful teachings on happiness, showing how we can readily achieve greater inner peace, contentment, self-confidence and joy. She will combine this with reflections on Bhutan’s Buddhist history, philosophies and most influential teachers that will dramatically enhance your appreciation of this astonishing country. These insights will personally support you long after you return home, and will also deepen each traveller’s enjoyment of the physical, social and spiritual landscapes of this beautiful kingdom as each treasured day unfolds.

## WILLIAM SUGANDA

William Suganda is the founder of *Inspired Traveller*. He has more than 15 years experience organizing highly focused small-group tours and is widely known for his punctilious attention to every detail that will make each traveller’s experience safe, inspiring and even enchanting. He and Stephanie have been co-leading successful tours for nearly a decade, including four tours to Japan. In preparation for this tour, William visited Bhutan in 2013 to detail and highlight what this magnificent “*once in a lifetime*” tour will offer. He will be assisted on the ground in Bhutan by a highly experienced local guide.



Photo taken by Anne Henley

# Travelling with Stephanie Dowrick & William Suganda

## PARTICIPANTS' COMMENTS

*"Words are insufficient to express how wonderful the Writing in Kyoto tour was. Everything about it was amazing. William was a wonderful, gentle, patient, knowledgeable and attentive guide. Stephanie is inspirational! Just being in her presence is a life-changing experience. The writing workshops were profound, expertly delivered and encouraged us to extend ourselves. Kyoto was a delight. So beautiful. The tour was the perfect blend of writing workshops, sightseeing and comfort. And oh the food!"*

Sandi Hill, Writing in Kyoto 2012

*"Having travelled with William and Stephanie previously I had an idea of what to expect from Kyoto. I found William and Stephanie ideal travelling companions. There is an aura of calm about them that I find therapeutic. The like-minded souls in the group were an utter joy to meet and spend time with. I look forward to a renewed joyful relationship with my journal."*

Karen Rolls, Writing in Kyoto 2013

*"The ripples in the small pond of time in Kyoto have reached out to so many of us into the oceans of our lives. I am, and I am sure the others are, so grateful."*

Dr Peggy Marks Wahlhaus, Writing in Kyoto 2012, 2013

*"You just have to turn up – everything else is taken care of thoughtfully. There is generous encouragement in an atmosphere of reflection, perception and, above all, goodwill."*

Jenny Cartmill, Writing in Kyoto 2013

*"William's organisation, care and patience was faultless. I couldn't praise this highly enough. Every small detail was attended to and made the trip effortless."*

Sigrid de Jong, participant of Writing in Kyoto 2013

*"Stephanie Dowrick's teaching is potent and universally accessible. Her wisdom inspires a diversity of individuals to meet their lives with greater insight, equanimity and creativity."*

Donna Idol, Manager, Mana Retreat Centre, New Zealand





# Bhutan daily travel itinerary

Included meals are indicated below as: **B** – breakfast, **L** – lunch, **D** – dinner.

## SUNDAY 19 OCTOBER

Today most participants will travel from their home cities to Bangkok international airport (Suvarnabhumi). Group travel to and from Thailand is NOT essential. However, we do require all participants to stay overnight at the nominated hotel near Bangkok airport in order to connect with the group's **early morning flight** to Paro the following day. The cost of that night's hotel in Bangkok is included in your tour fee.

## MONDAY 20 OCTOBER

Early this morning all participants will meet downstairs at our designated hotel near Bangkok international airport. We will then check in at Bangkok international airport for our pre-booked flight to Paro with Druk Air.

On arrival at Paro airport and after clearing customs, we will be met by our local guide and driver. **They will be with us throughout our stay in Bhutan.** On this first morning, they will take us on a brief sightseeing tour of Paro. We will stop for lunch at a local restaurant before travelling to the hotel to check into our rooms. While in Paro, we will be staying at the exquisite Zhiwa Ling hotel located approximately 8km from the city centre and considered one of the best in Paro. A luxury hotel situated on 10 acres in Paro Valley, with thrilling mountain views, it is the only Bhutanese-owned hotel to have a 5-star rating. It offers exceptional amenities including large rooms, the renowned Menlha Spa and its own tea house, meditation house, in-house temple and "Mad Monk" bar.

The rest of the afternoon is free time for you to explore the hotel and grounds, rest, refresh and then gather for our evening meal. **(L, D)**

## TUESDAY 21 OCTOBER

Following a leisurely breakfast, we will meet for the first of our five workshops with Stephanie Dowrick in the hotel's meditation house. These workshops will be highly informative, interactive and very relaxed with time for reflection and questions. Stephanie's workshops are a highlight of our tours and greatly enhance your overall experience.

In the afternoon, we will visit Paro Dzong, one of Bhutan's most impressive dzongs, visible throughout Paro valley. Scattered throughout Bhutan, most dzongs are "fortress-like" with towering exterior walls. Generally, they house a monastic body and local government offices and are rich in history and treasures. There will certainly be time to explore extensively on foot.

Returning to the hotel, you will enjoy the chance to unwind before our evening meal at the hotel's restaurant. **(B, L, D)**

## WEDNESDAY 22 OCTOBER

After breakfast, we will leave our hotel to travel by private bus to Thimphu, Bhutan's capital. (Please note that we return to the Zhiwa Ling Hotel for a further three nights at the end of the tour.) The journey will take about 90 minutes and will allow us to see more of the countryside. Home to the royal family and approximately 100,000 residents, Thimphu is now the only capital in the world where there are no traffic lights. Instead, police officers direct traffic at several major intersections. We will visit some of Thimphu's most interesting sites including the tranquil Trashi Chhoe Dzong in the city's north and National Memorial Chorten. We will also enjoy a walking tour of central Thimphu. Over the next four nights we will stay at the luxury 4-star Hotel Druk situated in the very heart of Thimphu, with easy access for any desired individual walks and exploring as well as the group excursions. **(B, L, D)**

## THURSDAY 23 OCTOBER

After a leisurely and delicious breakfast, we will have the second of our five workshops with Stephanie Dowrick. Today she will particularly explain the distinctive features of Vajrayana Buddhism, Guru Rinpoche, and the liberating power of the deities whose images you will be seeing everywhere you go.

Following a brief rest and lunch, we will board our private bus and head to the hills of Sangaygang to experience a panoramic view of the awesome Thimphu valley. We will then go on an exceptional scenic walk to Wangditse Goemba, a monastery founded in 1750. Among the deities revered there is Tsheringma, the goddess of longevity.

We return to the hotel in the late afternoon and will meet up for dinner in the evening. **(B, L, D)**

## FRIDAY 24 OCTOBER

Following breakfast, we will travel – again with our own bus – outside Thimphu for a full day's excursion to the Cheri Goemba (Chagri Dorjeden Monastery), a monastery built in 1620 by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, founder of the Bhutanese state. After entering Wangchuk National Park, we will hike for about one hour up a rather steep hill to Cheri, where monks traditionally go on a solitary retreat for three years, three months and three days. The monastery is now a major teaching and retreat center and according to Bhutanese religious histories, was first visited by the towering figure of Padmasambhava (Guru Rinpoche, the "Second Buddha") in the 8th century.

We return to the hotel late afternoon and meet for dinner in the evening. **(B, L, D)**

## SATURDAY 25 OCTOBER

---

After a delicious breakfast, we will have our third workshop with Stephanie Dowrick with extra time today for any questions that may be accumulating about your observations of temples and local sacred practices.

In the afternoon, we will visit the busy Thimphu markets, located near the Wangchhu River. From fresh organic produce and pungent dried fish to an array of textiles and handicrafts - including prayer wheels and mala beads - you will have ample time to explore Bhutan's largest and most colourful markets. The rest of the afternoon is free for you to rest at the hotel or to continue with your own explorations.

We meet for dinner in the evening. **(B, L, D)**

## SUNDAY 26 OCTOBER

---

After breakfast, your morning is free. This will allow you to walk, reflect or rest before we assemble in the hotel's lobby for our departure by our private bus to drive for about three hours to Punakha, a magical destination situated in one of Bhutan's most beautiful of valleys and at the intersection of where two rivers ("Mother River" and "Father River" representing male and female energies) meet. We will have lunch en route and will also make a stop at Do Chula pass at an altitude of 3150 metres. On a clear day the spine of the Himalayas will be visible.

Our very comfortable hotel in Punakha is the Kunzang Zhing Resort which also has a meditation room and walking and jogging tracks. We check into our hotel on arrival in Punakha and have a chance to rest before we meet for dinner in the evening. **(B, L, D)**

## MONDAY 27 OCTOBER

---

After breakfast we will visit the "Palace of great happiness or bliss", the massive, impressive 17th century Punakha Dzong (fortress) situated at the junction where the two rivers meet at the base of the valley. This dzong is regarded as Punakha's finest, and is particularly noted for its towering whitewashed walls, intricate wooden carvings, huge golden statues of the Buddha, and exceptional murals including those depicting the life of the historical Buddha (Siddhartha/Sakyamuni). The setting is simply spectacular and for many this visit will be an outstanding highlight.

The rest of the afternoon is free for you to rest or explore. Our local guide can advise those who want an active afternoon. We gather in the evening for dinner. **(B, L, D)**

## TUESDAY 28 OCTOBER

---

This morning we will enjoy a delicious breakfast before we have the fourth of our five workshops with Stephanie Dowrick. Today she will emphasise the most useful Buddhist practices woven into the social fabric of Bhutan and portable to our own lives. This is again followed by a free afternoon for you to relax or explore more of Punakha's vibrant life. William and our local guide will suggest some activities. A half-day's walk may be available for those who want that. Some may also want to visit the Sangchen Dorji Lhuendrup nunnery where women train for a monastic life and in a range of devotional creative skills.

We meet in the evening for our dinner at the hotel. **(B, L, D)**

## WEDNESDAY 29 OCTOBER

---

After breakfast, we will leave Punakha and spend a good part of the day travelling back to Paro by private bus. We will enjoy a lunch at a local restaurant en route and will have chances to take in (and photograph) the magnificent scenery on the way. On arrival back at the sumptuous Zhiwa Ling Hotel, we will check into our rooms and walk, explore, write, read or rest before we meet again in the evening for our shared dinner. **(B, L, D)**

## THURSDAY 30 OCTOBER

Today we experience what may well be a highlight of your travelling life as we hike to Taktshang Goemba, “Tiger’s Nest” or “Tiger’s Lair”, a famed monastery perched on a cliff 900 metres above a pine forest, overlooking Paro valley. This is regarded as one of Bhutan’s most sacred sites and is perhaps the kingdom’s most iconic landmark. The temple complex was first built in 1692, around the Taktsang Senge Samdup (stag tshang seng ge bsam grub) cave where, in the 8th century, Guru Rinpoche is said to have meditated for three years, three months, three weeks, three days and three hours. He is credited with introducing Buddhist philosophies and practices to Bhutan (from India) and is the tutelary deity of the country. Today, Paro Taktsang is the best known of the thirteen taktsang or “tiger lair” caves in which he meditated. The Guru mTshan-brgyad Lhakhang, the temple devoted to Padmasambhava, is the cultural icon of Bhutan.

The monastery is situated at an altitude of just over 3100 metres. We will begin our walk up to the monastery through pine forests at approximately 2600 metres. The 2-3 hour walking trail has excellent views across the valley and we will break the walk for a vegetarian lunch at a cafeteria with an impressive view of the monastery.

We will spend an unhurried afternoon at the monastery with ample time for contemplation before descending to the valley and returning to our hotel.

We will meet in the evening for our dinner. **(B, L, D)**

## FRIDAY 31 OCTOBER

We will gather for breakfast, and then meet for our concluding morning workshop with Stephanie Dowrick. The rest of the afternoon is free for you to enjoy your last day in Paro – and Bhutan. You might like to rest, meditate or receive a treatment at the hotel’s renowned Menlha spa. You can certainly walk in the hotel’s 10-acre gardens or arrange with our local guide a final vigorous walk should you wish.

We meet in the evening for our farewell dinner at the hotel. **(B, L, D)**

## SATURDAY 1 NOVEMBER

Following breakfast, we will transfer to the airport for our mid-morning flight to Bangkok. **(B)**

Due to the geographical location of Paro airport and operational requirements, the airline’s schedule is dependent on weather conditions and it is possible that the flight may be delayed. For this reason, we would highly recommend that your connecting flight from Bangkok departs the following day at the earliest. Please do not book a flight out of Bangkok for 1 November. The tour ends with your arrival in Bangkok so you will need to make your own arrangements for your accommodation or onward travel.



# Tour Costs

## TOUR COSTS

The "Happiness in the Land of Happiness" tour costs are fully inclusive of Bangkok accommodation pre-departure to Paro, the Druk Air flights to and from Bangkok to Paro, the Bhutan luxury accommodation, all meals, touring and transportation between centres, local guide and driver, workshops, and pre- and post-departure support as well as tour management.

\$8,950 per person (based on twin-share accommodation)  
\$2,250 supplement for single occupancy throughout.

## TOUR INCLUSIONS

The following expenses are **fully covered** by your tour fee:

- Accommodation in Bangkok airport hotel (to be advised) pre-departure, 1 night.
- Accommodation in luxury hotels for 12 nights in Bhutan.
- Return flights between Bangkok and Paro (economy class).
- All meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner) in Bhutan. Daily bottled water.
- Workshops with Dr Stephanie Dowrick.
- Tour management and pre- and post-departure support from William Suganda.
- An English-speaking local guide.
- Private bus and dedicated driver throughout.
- Visa fee.
- Taxes and entry fees (to monasteries, temples) while touring in Bhutan.
- Pre-departure notes.
- DVD of shared photographs as a post-tour memento.
- Tips to local guide and driver.

## TOUR EXCLUSIONS

The following expenses are not covered by your tour fee:

- Air travel between your home city and Bangkok.
- Travel and medical insurance (this is an essential requirement).
- Personal expenses and incidentals.
- Spa expenses at hotels.
- Alcoholic and soft drinks.
- Individual offerings made to temples.

## FLIGHTS BETWEEN YOUR HOME CITY AND BANGKOK

There is no group flight into or out of Bangkok since we will have participants gathering from multiple countries. When arranging your flight to Bangkok, you will need to arrive by the evening of Sunday 19 October 2014. Our flight from Bangkok to Paro leaves very early on Monday 20 October. This is a group flight and will be booked as soon as your deposit is received.

Due to the geographical location of Paro airport and operational requirements, flights leaving Paro are subject to variable weather conditions. We recommend that your onward flight from Bangkok is booked for 2 November or later. While William can make recommendations, you will need to arrange your own accommodation in Bangkok post-tour.





# Additional Information

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Please read the following information carefully:

Exchange rate: the tour is priced in US dollars using the exchange rate of 1 AUD = 0.87 USD. If the US dollar drops significantly in value against the Australian dollar we will need to adjust the tour costs. We will notify you before the final payment is due.

Tour viability: we need a minimum of 12 participants for this tour to proceed. We will limit this tour to a maximum of 18 participants, plus your tour leaders. We already have significant interest in the tour.

Single rooms are available at an additional cost. If you are travelling on your own and are happy to share we will do our best to allocate you a twin-share room with a congenial traveller.

**Travel and medical insurance is mandatory. You must provide a copy of your insurance certificate to Inspired Traveller before departure.** It is possible to purchase travel and medical insurance from our travel agent, My Way Travel (details below).

A pre-departure meeting will be held in Sydney about three to four weeks before the tour's departure. Important tour information along with travel notes will be distributed. If you don't live in Sydney, or cannot attend, William will post these documents to you and is available by phone meanwhile to answer any questions.

Bottled water is included with meals.

Please read the booking conditions and the cancellation policy on the application form. When your booking form is received, we will request **our travel operator in Bhutan** to secure your seats on the flight between Paro and Bangkok. We need to travel as a group on that flight so it is essential that you secure your booking as soon as possible.

Due to the strict reservation policy of luxury hotels in Bhutan, final tour payment must be finalised 75 days before departure. We will send you a final statement by 90 days before departure.

## ACCOMMODATION

We will be staying in luxury hotels while in Bhutan, a grade above the regular tourist hotels most travellers use. While these hotels attract a surcharge, included in your tour cost, they offer a significantly more comfortable, restorative experience compared to regular tourist hotels where there is often a lack of consistency between rooms. Each of the hotels where we will stay has been carefully selected and inspected by William Suganda on a recent trip to Bhutan in preparation for this tour.

**Paro** – Zhiwa Ling Hotel (5 nights: 2 at the beginning and 3 at the conclusion of the tour), 8kms from Paro city, the first Bhutanese-owned hotel in this 5-star category, with very well appointed rooms. It has extensive gardens, the renowned Menlha Spa, a tea house, meditation house and a temple on the second floor built with pillars 400 years old from Gangte Monastery.

**Thimphu** – Hotel Druk (4 nights), located in the heart of the capital, with easy access to this extraordinary centre, the elegant rooms are tastefully appointed with modern amenities.

**Punakha** – Kunzang Zhing Resort (3 nights), 4.5km from Punakha city, this newly built property has contemporary and very well appointed rooms with modern amenities.

## TO BOOK

To secure your place on this once-only tour, please complete the application form (available via the [www.inspiredtraveller.com.au](http://www.inspiredtraveller.com.au) website or from William Suganda, [william@inspiredtraveller.com.au](mailto:william@inspiredtraveller.com.au)). This will make it clear how you pay the deposit. You will then send the form with your A\$1500 deposit per person as follows:

**Email** [therese@mywaytravel.com.au](mailto:therese@mywaytravel.com.au)

**Fax** +61 2 8580 5771

**Post** Therese Moran  
My Way Travel  
P.O. Box 1303  
Woollahra NSW 1350

## FURTHER INFORMATION

For enquiries about the tour, including the travel itinerary, health or fitness levels, please contact:

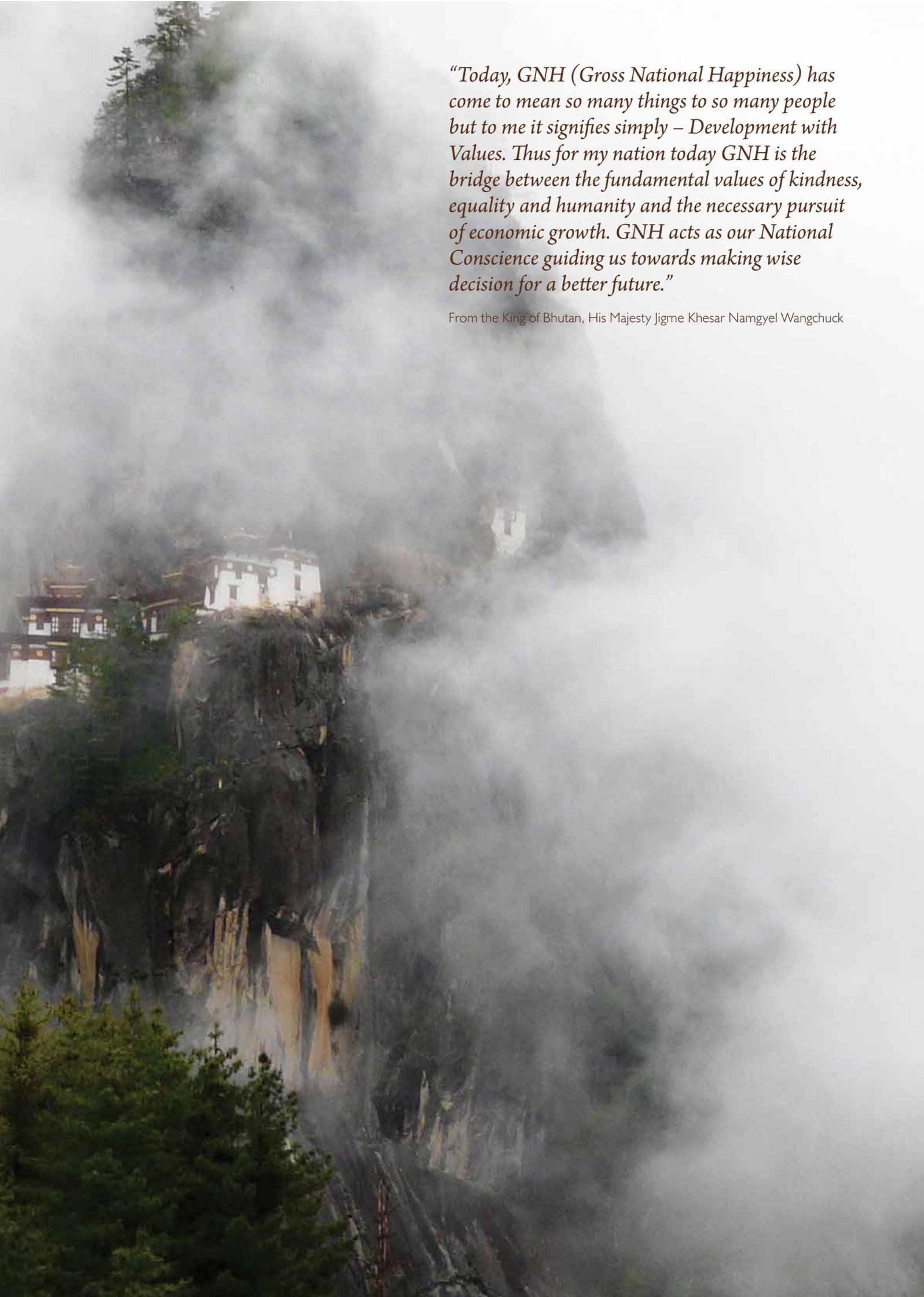
William Suganda at **Inspired Traveller**  
**Email** [william@inspiredtraveller.com.au](mailto:william@inspiredtraveller.com.au)  
**Phone** +61 2 8005 0978 (Australia)



If your enquiry specifically relates to additional travel arrangements to complement this tour, payments, flights and/or travel/medical insurance, please contact:

Therese Moran at **My Way Travel**  
**Email** [therese@mywaytravel.com.au](mailto:therese@mywaytravel.com.au)  
**Phone** +61 2 9327 7400





*“Today, GNH (Gross National Happiness) has come to mean so many things to so many people but to me it signifies simply – Development with Values. Thus for my nation today GNH is the bridge between the fundamental values of kindness, equality and humanity and the necessary pursuit of economic growth. GNH acts as our National Conscience guiding us towards making wise decision for a better future.”*

From the King of Bhutan, His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck