Dear Readers,

Druk Travel Service wishes you a pleasant year ahead! Behold an unprecedented journey into a land brimming with mystery and a society immersed in deep Buddhism. The Kingdom of Bhutan lies within the majestic eastern Himalayas, landlocked between India and China. *The Land of the Thunder Dragon* is a naturally home to scenic beauty. Pristine rivers thread the lush and evergreen valleys; waterfalls plunge down beautiful mountainsides and the great snowcapped peaks of the inner Himalayas are together a sight not to be missed. Fluttering prayer flags, delightful farmhouses amidst terraced fields, and monasteries clinging onto the breathtaking landscape speak volumes for how well the culture and tradition, as well as the environment, is preserved in Bhutan.

Bhutan Buzz is our initiative to showcase the range of tourist destinations and the must-see places in Bhutan to fellow travellers. This bi-monthly edition contains information about the ongoing festivals, the products that are being currently offered to fellow travellers, interesting facts about the country and the hottest destinations in Bhutan.

We hope you have a great time reading this issue of Bhutan Buzz.

Tashi Delek
Aviation: The deadline for the completion of the Yonphula domestic airport in Kanglung, Trashigang has been deferred to March this year.

The airport is expected to be operational starting April 2017 according to the Department of Air Transport (DAT). Due to some technical issues, the Yonphula airport, which was supposed to have been completed by October last year, was delayed. Heavy rainfall in the month of July at the location also added to the deferral. The airport, which was closed in 2013, is being renovated to improve safety features, and compliance with international standards. One of the major changes being carried out is on the realignment of one half of the runway. Another major change is flattening and resurfacing the runway. The slope of the runway, which was 3.8 per cent, has been brought down to below 2 per cent, which is acceptable by international standards, said Karma Wangchuk. The changes to Yonphula airport are being funded by ADB under the Air Transport Connectivity Enhancement project. A total of USD 6.9 million has been provided to improve all three domestic airports. A further USD 4 million has been earmarked by ADB to supplement the project if required.

Destination Chhukha

Chhukha is a hot, wet region of dense Sub-Tropical forests located in South Western Bhutan. The region is home to many important plant and animal species.

There are two main ethnic groups present in Chhukha, the Ngalops and the Lhotshampas. The Lhotshampas are a Southern Bhutanese people of Nepalese origin. The Chhukha region holds a wealth of cultural diversity since various non-Buddhist festivals, customs, and traditions are also part of the heritage here.

The Chhukha region is one of great religious significance as it has been blessed by many renowned Buddhist masters including the venerable Lama Drakpa Jamtsho in the 17th century CE. He established the Jabar Goemba (Monastery) at a site surrounded by five mountains with an auspicious resemblance to the five religious hats worn by the Lamas. The main relic of this monastery is a holy Phurba or ritual dagger that is said to have flown to the monastery from Tibet. Legend has it that even today the dagger continues to defy gravity.

Another important religious site in the region is the Tshamdrak Goemba. This monastery dates back to the 17th century and was founded by Lam Ngawang Drakpa. It contains important relics such as 100 Ceremonial Drums and a large stone slab that is attributed to Ap Chundu, the guardian deity of Haa.

The most distinctive feature of Chhukha is the Chhukha and Tala Hydropower projects. The two projects tap the fast-running waters of the Wangchhu and Paachhu Rivers to produce more than 1,500 Megawatts of power. The two dams are absolutely crucial to the country as they are still the largest providers of revenue for the Kingdom of Bhutan.
Trongsa, the sacred and temporal heart of the country is a two day journey from Thimphu. Situated in central Bhutan, it was once the seat of power over the Central and Eastern regions. Both the first and second kings of Bhutan ruled the country from this ancient seat and it is customary for the crown prince to serve as the Trongsa Penlop (‘governor’) prior to ascending the throne.

The dzong, built in 1648, is a massive structure with many levels, sloping down the contours of the ridge upon which it is built. The dzong’s highly strategic position, on the only connecting route between Eastern and Western Bhutan, allowed the Trongsa Penlop to control travel and trade in the country, effectively placing him in command of the whole of the Central and Eastern regions of the country.

Of the many festivals held in various parts of Trongsa, the grandest is the three day annual Tshechu. This festival brings together people from all walks of life and falls sometime in the month of December. In addition to traditional mask dances, visitors can witness the unfurling of the sacred Thongdrol and receive blessings from high ranking monks. People also receive blessings from the sacred Nangtens that is opened during the last day of the Tshechu.

Bhutan celebrates International Mountain Day

Event: Bhutan observed International Mountain Day with the theme ‘Mountain Cultures: Celebrating Diversity and Strengthening Identity’, at the Clock Tower Square in Thimphu on December 12 2016.

The day is observed this year to highlight the variety and richness of mountain cultures, promote the vast array of mountain identities and, ensure that indigenous rights are recognised and traditional ways endure. The occasion is also used to raise awareness on Climate Change, especially among the youth, through dance and art.

(Source Kuensel; National newspaper)

### Park Hotel, Phuentsholing Town

Located in the heart of Phuentsholing town, the Park Hotel offers its guests a refreshing experience steeped in comfort and luxury. We cater to the needs of long-distance travellers as well as local Bhutanese guests. All guests are guaranteed customised services to help them unwind from their long road travels; ensuring instant rejuvenation in the very midst of bustling Phuentsholing.

<table>
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<th>Rooms</th>
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**Hotel facilities & services**

- Cable TV
- Travel Desk
- Phone
- Bottled Water
- Electronic Safe
- Laundry
- Dining
- Room Service
- Air Conditioner
- WiFi

✉️: reservations@parkhotelbhutan.com
📞: +975-17795042
📍: Tharpai Lam, Phuentsholing, Chhukha, Bhutan-3
Bhutan Kitchen

Bhutan Kitchen is a restaurant in Thimphu, located on Gatoen Lam, in the central Clock Tower Square area. It is located on the top floor of a modern white building which retains aspects of traditional Bhutanese architecture.

Bhutan Kitchen serves Bhutanese cuisine in addition to a multi-cuisine menu. One of its specialties is ema datshi (chillies and cheese). The interior is decorated in the traditional Bhutanese style with traditional seating, a traditional kitchen and store room.

**Dining options**  Dinner, Lunch, Reservations, Seating, Serves Alcohol, Wait-staff

**Cuisine**  Bhutanese

**Contact**  +97517613515

Gatoen Lam, Thimphu, Bhutan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Values in Celsius</th>
<th>Paro</th>
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<th>Punakha</th>
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*To be noted that average temperatures are recorded from valley floors. There can be considerable divergences from the recorded figures depending upon elevation*