

## Men in search of their spirit



*Written by Chiara Muzzin*

Bhutan is known in some circles to be a place of happiness and mystery. To others, Bhutan is unknown. Located between Tibet and India, the country thrives with culture and awe-inspiring scenery. The people's authentic smiles are welcoming and the land is rich with incredible energy. One man's journey throughout this magnificent kingdom will create endless possibilities and its rare beauty will inspire you to search for your spirit.

Tim Bidstrup joined wellbeing tourism operator *Journeys of the Spirit* to discover a treasured and extraordinary part of this world. It was the very personal and inspiring experiences *Journeys of the Spirit* creates that captured Tim's attention. He had heard whispers about Bhutan for a long time and throughout his other travel experiences he had heard many people speaking of this mysterious land. He believed it was a place few people had visited.

"My partner introduced me to Journeys of the Spirit. A retreat to Bhutan was on offer and reading about the spiritual aspects of the trip I thought it would be different than just an ordinary holiday. I didn't think twice about going to Bhutan as I just felt it was going to be a really good fit."

Traveling with Journeys of the Spirit, where intent and exploring the essence of sacred cultures is their style connected Tim to the spiritual aspects of his personal journey.



“At that point in my life I was learning about Buddhism. I was starting to gain knowledge about it and it was something that really clicked with me. The thought of going to a Buddhist nation and to see Buddhism in practice for me was a really strong draw card.”

Before going to Bhutan, Tim travelled throughout much of India’s poorest regions. Although the people he saw and spoke to barely have the necessities to live, he believes they are some of the happiest people he has ever seen in his life.

“Seeing it all teaches you a different way of looking at the world. There is so much suffering in this world and to me the suffering isn’t only to do with your surroundings it is something upstairs that leads to that suffering. For me, Buddhism was a way of recognising this. Finding a bit of freedom and a way of being virtuous and good to others...to start to be kind to you and be kind to others is the life we should aspire to lead.”

These touching and cherished moments that Tim experienced in Bhutan were not only fostered by the local people he met, he was heartened by the honoring, nurturing and support given by others within the group in which he travelled with.

“The opportunity to reflect, to weave through this spiritual heartland and be given the space in which you can just be yourself is the beauty of what Journeys of the Spirit creates.

“I would say to people if they feel a nagging in their belly that there is something more or that they’re missing something, that they need to open up themselves to the possibility that they can find what they’re after. They need to be open to that and it’s very hard to fill that hole in your belly sitting on the couch. If you have the opportunity to go to some of these magical places, which have their own energy, whether you believe in energy or not, then go for it.”

Returning from Bhutan, Tim reflected on the moments of his journey, which revealed his true self.

“I rediscovered how much I enjoyed making people laugh, how I still withhold the inquisitive spirit of a child, how I can be carefree, fun and not curve myself for the judgment of other people. But most of all, I learnt that I have a strong ability of being a natural leader.”

A few months after this journey, Tim began working with the ManKind Project. He had a huge desire to share his experiences and what he rediscovered of himself. He was also aware there are

many things he still wanted to learn about what it meant to be a man of his generation.



“The greatest thing of what the ManKind Project does, is it teaches you what it means to be a man. It isn’t all about hugging, crying and being soft in that way because there are reasons why men are men and why they differ from women. There are also things such as integrity, authenticity and accountability. They are part of the big reasons why men feel unhappy because they don’t feel like they’re living in integrity. It is really interesting to see how men react when they are held accountable to grow and blossom and suddenly develop confidence in themselves. So it’s really powerful in that way too.”

In Tim’s ongoing work with the ManKind Project the struggles that men experience on a day-to-day basis come out over and over again. For men of his generation, it hasn’t improved. As Tim describes, there was no leadership, there was no teaching of what it means to be a man, and there was no understanding of what a man is.

“My role model was very emotionally confined and restricted and you are taught that from a very young age - don’t cry. That’s just what we are taught. The mystery that I am trying to work out is how to get over that and it’s not an easy thing to do in a way that is acceptable to men because it is very uncomfortable.

Imagine if you’ve never done anything or if you haven’t done something for your whole life and suddenly be asked to open up, to change who you are and what you’ve always been taught to believe and what you are meant to be to get by. It doesn’t stop when you leave childhood. You get through your work career and it’s the way men are portrayed in every movie that you see. So it’s very pervasive. It goes throughout a whole society.”

Tim is learning from both the ManKind project and what he discovered in Bhutan and is implementing this within his daily life and his work. As Tim talks about the most rewarding part of working for the men’s movement, you can feel a strong sense of passion for what he does.

“The looks on the men’s faces are the most rewarding part of working for the Man Kind Project. When they go through one of the weekends, they literally come out on the other side as different people carrying about three less tonnes on their shoulders. They realise they can be part of something bigger and that they’re not alone. They can be part of a community because a lot of men do feel isolated. It is really powerful to see. You know that they are going to take that on

throughout their lives and pass it on to their kids, to their own sons from a young age and it creates that stop in the cycle. That's the thing that I love the most."

Tim has a clear ambition to create more opportunities for men, fathers and sons to explore and discover their true adventurous spirit. He is currently creating some exciting experiences in partnership with Journeys of the Spirit.

In May 2013, Tim will be leading his first group back to Bhutan. His inspiring and passionate temperament is in complete alignment with what Journeys is about.

"The thought of taking other people there really lights me up, it really does. The thought of going back there myself for a start just blows me away. Although I've always known since the day I have stepped there that I would be back. I can't wait!"

Websites:

[www.journeysofthespirit.com.au](http://www.journeysofthespirit.com.au)

[www.mkpau.org](http://www.mkpau.org)