

We often develop most when our understandings of ourselves and the world around us are challenged—when we engage with people and ideas that are different. -Joseph O'Shea

Cultural immersion is a unique way to experience the world. It offers deep insight into another culture, its languages, food, beliefs, traditions and community. It's easy to do things we are familiar with, to communicate with familiar people and to follow the well-worn route. But cultural immersion makes us go beyond the familiar; it is more than just being a tourist in a new country- it's a unique opportunity to engage meaningfully with the people who call it home, to build relationships, make friends and see life from another perspective; to truly become a **global citizen**.

30th July 2017 was a proud day for **Ridge Valley School, Gurgaon** as its first International Students' Immersion program was launched. 11 students from Grades 6 to 8 and one teacher took off for a trip to Bhutan. They were part of a group comprising of four schools- Vasant Valley School, Mayo Girls College, Welham Girls' School and **Ridge Valley School**. The flight to Bhutan left the troop awestruck as they caught glimpses of the magnificent Mt Everest, Mt Makalu and other lofty peaks which seemed to be floating on a sea of clouds. Showers of rain welcomed them as they landed at Paro. From there began their amazing journey to Thimpu, the capital of Bhutan. They visited the beautiful dzongs, ancient temples, museums, market places, went on hikes and nature walks across paddy fields and of course, the most challenging and rewarding hike to Tiger's Nest.

The team had the privilege to visit the India House and meet the Indian Ambassador. They learnt about the relation between India and Bhutan and got an opportunity to ask their questions. The students were later joined by **Principal, Mrs. Guneet Ohri** and together, they also visited the ESL school in Thimpu and The Royal Academy in Paro, where they interacted with the students, learnt the Buddhist tradition of meditation and etiquettes, tasted their traditional food served in the traditional way. They discovered their mutual love for Football and Basketball and performed their traditional dances for each other.

The amazing beauty of the country, the soft-spoken, peace-loving people who take immense pride in their culture, the zero carbon footprint model of Bhutan left them completely spellbound and possessed with the desire to go back again and re-read this beautiful tale of serendipity, a tale their school made possible for them to experience!

Arrival at Paro airport



At the Buddha point, Thimphu



Meeting the Indian Ambassador to Bhutan



A walk through the Paddy fields, Punakha



The Punakha Dzong, Punakha



The exhausting yet most rewarding trek to Tiger's Nest



Enjoying a Traditional meal at The Royal Academy, Paro

