

9 DAYS BHUTAN TRIP

Thimphu, Punakha & Paro

30th September Monday Day 01 Arrive Paro by Druk Air & transfer to Thimphu

The flight to Paro is one of the most spectacular in entire Himalayas. Flying along the Himalayan range from Kathmandu, the journey offers fascinating views and an exciting descent into the Kingdom. Bhutan's first gift to you as you disembark from the aircraft will be cool, clean fresh mountain air. After immigration formalities and baggage collection, you will be met by our representative, and afterwards drive to Thimphu, the capital town of Bhutan.

On arrival, in Thimphu check-into the hotel. The capital town of Bhutan and the centre of government, religion and commerce, Thimphu is a unique city with unusual mixture of modern development alongside ancient traditions. With the population of about 90,000 it is perhaps still the world's only capital city without a traffic light.

The day will conclude with a visit of **Trashichhoedzong**, "fortress of the glorious religion". This is the center of government and religion, site of monarch's throne room and seat of Je Khenpo or Chief Abbot. Built in 1641 by the political and religious unifier of Bhutan, Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, it was reconstructed in 1960s in traditional Bhutanese manner, without nails or architectural plans.

Overnight at the hotel in Thimphu.



1st October Tuesday Day 02: Thimphu

After breakfast, proceed for the guided tour of city's main attractions that includes:

Textile Museum: is worth a visit to get to know the living national art of weaving. Exhibitions introduce the major weaving techniques, styles of local dress and textiles made by women and men.

National Library: The history of Bhutan lies imprinted in archaic texts, which are preserved at the National Library. Besides thousands of manuscripts and ancient texts, the library also has modern academic books and printing blocks for prayer flags.

Institute for Zorig Chusum: Commonly known as Arts & Crafts School or Painting School, the Institute offers a six-year course on the 13 traditional arts and crafts of Bhutan. On a visit, one can see students learning the various skills taught at the school.

Simply Bhutan Museum: The newly commissioned museum depicts the ancient Bhutanese architecture which is being lost to modernization. The uniqueness of the structure is in its composition of the materials used. The structure is built reusing old timber, window and door frames and other items from traditional and old demolished houses. The best part is the portrayal of the age-old life styles of the Bhutanese people.

Lunch followed by city tour that includes:

Memorial Chorten: The stupa built in the memory of Bhutan's third King, His Late Majesty, King Jigme Dorji Wangchuk, who is popularly regarded as Father of modern Bhutan. The paintings and statues inside the monument provide a deep insight into Buddhist philosophy.

Buddha Point (Kuensel Phodrang). Located at a short drive from Thimphu city Centre, visitors can get a good overview of the Thimphu valley from the Buddha point (Kuensel Phodrang). You can pay your obeisance and offer prayers to the Buddha, the largest statue in the country and then walk around and take a glimpse of the valley.

Takin Preserve, Motithang: The Takin is the national animal of Bhutan and looks like a cross between a cow and a goat. Legend has it that the animal was created by the great Buddhist yogi, Drupa Kunley, and it can be found only in Bhutan and nearby areas. Taxonomists place the animal in a category of its own as it is not similar enough to any other animal to fit established categories.

Overnight at the hotel in Thimphu.

2nd October Wednesday Day 03: Thimphu – Punakha (75 km, 3 hrs. approx.)

After breakfast at hotel, drive to Punakha across Dochula pass (3,080m). In Bhutan, the passes are marked by a large Bhutanese Chorten and prayer flag. Dochula pass offers the most spectacular view over the high peaks of the eastern Himalayas on a clear day.

After checking into hotel, proceed to **visit Punakha Dzong**, a massive structure built at the junction of two rivers. It was the capital of Bhutan until 1955, and still serves as the winter residence of the monk body.

Later in the day **excursion to Chimi Lhakhang** (from hotel it is about 15 minutes' drive till motorable road and then walk starts through paddy fields and villages. This is total about 1.1/2 hour walk, including both way)

The Chimi Lhakhang, situated on a hillock in the center of the valley, also known as the temple of fertility. It is widely believed that couples who do not have children and wanting one, if they pray at this temple, they are usually blessed with a child very soon. The trail leads across rice fields to the tiny settlement of Pana, meaning 'field'. A walk through the village near the temple will give you rare glimpses into the daily life and lifestyle of the villagers

Overnight at the hotel in Punakha.



3rd October Thursday Day 04: Punakha

After breakfast, the day starts with a hike to **Khamsum Yulley Namgyal** that stands majestically above the Punakha Valley. It was built over a period of 9 years. It took team of Bhutanese craftsmen including carpenters, painters and sculptors who consulted holy scriptures rather than engineering manuals to construct this 4 stories temple. It is a splendid example of Bhutan's fine architectural and artistic tradition and the only one of its kind in the world. Built by Her Majesty the Queen Mother, this temple is dedicated for the well being of the kingdom and the benefit of all sentient beings.

After the morning hike, a visit to **Phochu Suspension Bridge** that is enclosed by the mountainous Bhutan hill, deck with vibrant prayer flags and traditional Buddhist garland. It connects the Punakha Dzong with the Punakha town, the bridge spans 350m and dangles above the meandering mountain river, Po Chu. It is the second longest suspension bridge in Bhutan.

At the end of the day, a visit to **Sangchhen Dorji Lhuendrup Lhakhang**. It is a temple plus nunnery perched on a ridge overlooking Lobesa, Punakha and Wangduephodrang valleys.



4th October Friday Day 05: Punakha to Paro (125 km, 4hr Drive)

After breakfast at hotel, a drive back to Paro descending back down from Dochula La, follow the way back up the dramatic Wang Chhu and Paro Chhu river valleys, before crossing through Paro Town towards the north end of the valley

En route visit **Simtokha Dzong**, the place of profound tantric teaching, this dzong now houses a school for the study of the Dzongkha language.

Tachog Lhakhang 'temple of the hill of the excellent horse' It is said that while Thangtong Gyalpo was meditating here, he had a vision of the spiritual horse Balaha-an emanation of Avalokiteshvara.

Later in the day after checking into hotel, proceed to visit **Ta Dzong**, originally built as Watchtower, which now houses National Museum. The extensive collection includes antique thangka paintings, textiles, weapons & armor, household objects and a rich assortment of natural and historic artifacts.

Ta Dzong visit shortly followed by a short walk down the trail to visit **Rinpung Dzong**, meaning ("fortress of the heap of jewels"), which has a long and fascinating history. Along the wooden galleries lining the inner courtyard are fine wall paintings illustrating Buddhist lore such as four friends, the old man of long life, the wheel of life, scenes from the life of Milarepa, Mount. Sumeru and another cosmic Mandala.

Overnight at the hotel in Paro.

5th October Saturday Day 06: Paro

After breakfast, a drive to **Chele la** (mountain pass) at an elevation 3,988meters, consider to be one of the highest motorable passes in Bhutan. About an hour drive along a thickly forested road, it is a botanical paradise where you can see the sight of Himalayan Mountain. The pass mark by hundreds of prayer flags fluttering in the wind.

On the way back to town will pass through **Drukgyel Dzong** (a visit from outside), a ruined fortress where Bhutanese warriors fought Tibetan invaders centuries ago. The snowy dome of sacred Chomolhari "mountain Goddess" can be seen in all her glory as we approach the Dzong.

Along the way, a visit to the 7th Century **Kyichu Lhakhang**, one of the 108 temples built in the Himalayas by Tibetan king, Songtsen Gampo. The building of this temple marks the introduction of Buddhism in Bhutan.

6th October Saturday Day 07: Paro – excursion to Taktsang Monastery (TIGER NEST) (5hrs hike) World Heritage Site

After breakfast excursion to **Taktsang Monastery (TIGER NEST)** (5hrs hike): It is one of the most famous of Bhutan's monasteries, perched on the side of a cliff 900m above the Paro valley floor. It is said that Guru Rinpoche arrived here on the back of a tigress and meditated at this monastery and hence it is called 'Tiger's Nest'. This site has been recognized as a most sacred place and visited by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal in 1646 and now visited by all Bhutanese at least once in their lifetime. On 19 April 1998, a fire severely damaged the main structure of building but now this Bhutanese jewel has been restored to its original splendour.

Overnight at the hotel in Paro.

7th October Sunday Day 08

Khenpola Program: Meditation and Teaching

Following the Khenpola Program, we will play Bhutan's National sport – Archery and see some Culture show performances.

Free time for shopping after lunch.

8th October Monday DAY 09: DEPART PARO

After early breakfast at the hotel, drive to the airport for flight to your onward destination. Our representative will help you with exit formalities and then bid you farewell.

THE ABOVE COST IS NETT PAYABLE TO US AND INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING SERVICES:

- Accommodation as per the itinerary (3* and 4* hotels)
- All meals
- All transfers and sightseeing as per the itinerary
- English speaking accompanying guide
- Government Royalty / Taxes
- Entrance Fees
- Bhutan Visa Fee
- Cultural Show at Hotel
- Mineral Water

THE FOLLOWING ARE PAYABLE EXTRA (NOT INCLUDED IN OUR COST):

- Insurance of any kind / medical expenses
- Beverages (alcoholic / non – alcoholic)
- Expenses of personal nature (like tipping, laundry, Telephone/fax calls, camera/video fees etc.)

VEHICLE USED: *Coaster Bus (18-seater) – 16 Pax*

***** Bhutan visa procedure for all nationals (except Indian/Bangladeshi/Maldivian)**

- We require color scan of passport for visa about 30 days prior to travel date (sooner the better & minimum 7 working days needed to process and obtain Bhutan visa).
- Color scan or take picture by your mobile phone/digicam of the passport page with face image and passport number & email us in Jpeg/pdf format.
- Remaining validity in passport after Bhutan tour must be min 6 month excluding travelling month.
- * Tourism Council of Bhutan requires full tour payment while applying visa so along with passport copy, please forward us wire transfer copy or payment details, to process visa.
- Multiple Indian visa required if you enter Bhutan from India and re-enter India after Bhutan tour.
- Passengers visiting India on E - tourist visa & entering Bhutan by Air (by remaining in transit at Delhi / Kolkata airport) and re-entering India after Bhutan tour by surface (Phuentsholing, Samdrup Jonkhar & Gelephu) are required to travel with original Indian visa stamped in passport by Indian embassy/consulate at their home country as there is no facilities at these border towns to check & verify Indian E - Visa.
- No passport size photo/any pictures / any visa form etc required for Bhutan visa – only requirement is clear/readable copy of passport copy in colour.
- Dual passport holders are required to use the same passport whose details are submitted on to Bhutan for Visa authorization, prior to arrival in Bhutan.
- It is mandatory for a tourist (except Indian/Bangladeshi/Maldivian) to buy full service tour package from a local Bhutanese tour operator like us to avail Bhutan visa.
- Bhutan visa fee is US\$ 40/ which is going to be included in tour cost submitted by us.

Passport copies also required for ticket issuance for verifying correct names, same passport copy may not be valid for Bhutan visa if it doesn't meet all above conditions.

Should you require any further assistance, please do let us know.

Additional Photos for Itinerary



Punakha Suspension Bridge and Chelela Pass

Picture can speak a million words but nothing beats the feeling of real life experience. We look forward to welcome you to experience of a life time in the magical scenery of the Kingdom of Bhutan