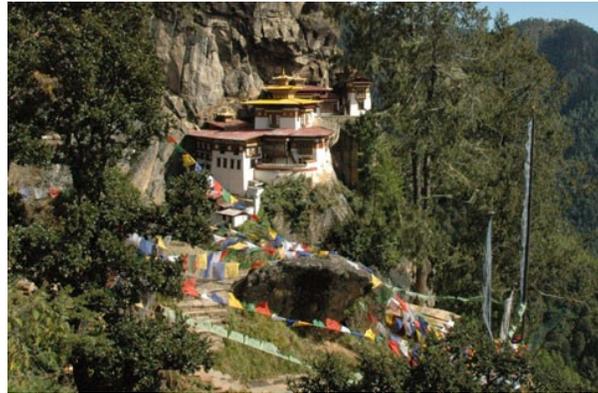


Information on Bhutan



Location	South Asia, sandwiched between the borders of India and China.
Capital	Thimphu
Language	Dzongkha, English are the official languages
Climate	The northern parts of the country are intensely cold, especially in winters. The summers are pleasant. The temperatures in Southern Bhutan are moderate and the climate is pleasant.
Currency	Ngultrum. The Indian Rupee is also accepted during transactions.
Country Code	975
Activities	Trekking, Mountaineering, Cultural Tours are the main activities for tourists. Limited facilities are available for biking and rafting

Bhutan is a tiny monarchy sandwiched between its giant neighbors India and China. The landlocked Buddhist state, though poor, is a calm, peaceful state with devoutly religious people. The state is known as a modern Shangri La because of its discouragement of foreign cultural influences and limited number of visitors allowed into the country. However, with the recent opening up of the country, the world is just beginning to recognize the charms of this Himalayan kingdom, with unexplored mountains, virgin forests and little waterfalls dotting the region.

The capital, Thimphu, is considered one of the smallest capital cities in the world. It is the largest and most populated city of Bhutan. All buildings in Thimphu, throughout Bhutan in fact, are built on traditional Bhutanese architectural principles.

How to Reach

Paro International Airport lies 2 hours' drive from the capital Thimphu. Regular flights operate between Paro and Kathmandu in Nepal, or Delhi and Kolkata in India, operated by Druk Air, Bhutan's national carrier. Bhutan has a system of well-maintained roads for travel within the country.

Cities in Bhutan

Bhutan is a tiny landlocked kingdom in South Asia. Its restricted visitor policy and unexplored regions have earned it the sobriquet "The Shangri la of the Modern World". The unexplored nature of the cities and wildernesses of Bhutan is what makes them so attractive to the visit.

The capital, Thimpu, is the most unusual capital city you might have come across. The city does not have any traffic lights, since there are hardly any vehicles on the roads. The Thimpu River flows by quietly, and unlike other rivers next to major cities, has clear, unpolluted waters. The Trashy Chhoe Dzong houses the country's administrative headquarters and the office of the king. The Institute of Indigenous Medicine is located next to the one of the largest religious libraries in Asia.

Tongsa Dzong, in the Bumthang Valley, is a multistoried fort cut out from the hillside. It is a marvel of architecture, housing many monasteries, memorials and temples.

Kurjey, or Kurjey Lakhang, is located in the town of Jakar in the Bumthang Valley. Kurjey is a complex of temples and caves built in 1652. The complex towers almost 9000 feet above sea level. The Kurjey Lakhang has a white façade and red roofs, making it stand out against the brown hills in the background.

Sakteng is located 50 miles from Tashigang, in southern Bhutan's Bumthang Valley. The town lies very close to India's border. The drive from Tashigang to Sakteng entails a rough drive over difficult mountainous terrain, roads frequently cut off by boulders. However, the drive is worth it, as the journey will bring you to the most interesting places of the spectacular Bumthang valley. Sakteng is located in the mysterious wildernesses of Bhutan, the abode of the "Migoi" known as the "Yeti" in Nepal.

Tour Attractions in Bhutan

Bhutan is a tourist's paradise owing to its unexplored mountains and forests, its little visited valleys and mysterious Buddhist temples and monasteries. Each region of Bhutan has different characteristics. The people are very religious, and the significance of religion in their lives can be gauged from the number of Bhutanese festivals celebrating religious themes.

Paro Valley lies in the central part of Bhutan. The city of Paro, the second largest in Bhutan (Thimpu is the largest), has the only airport in Bhutan. Paro is the ancient center of religion and governance in Bhutan. The Dzongs, or temple complexes, the monasteries and palaces of Paro seem as old as the surrounding Himalayas and pine forests. The serenity of the Valley, so shielded from the influences of the outside world, seems to have stopped time in its tracks.

The picturesque Bumthang Valley lies in the southeastern part of Bhutan. The Bumthang Valley, apart from its spectacular natural beauty, is noted for its many Dzongpas, or temple complexes,

and palaces. Jakar is the main town in Bumthang Valley. It has narrow, small streets with shops selling everything from apple brandy to yak cheese and silver ornaments. Other places to visit in the mystical Bumthang Valley are the Kurjey Temple and the many monasteries dotting the place.

The Bhutanese people are devotedly religious, and this spirituality shines through in the major festivals of Bhutan. This does not mean that there are no occasions for people to be boisterous and enjoy themselves. The Tsechus Festival attracts many devotees and tourists. The less exuberant Dromcho festival is of great religious significance.

Sample Itinerary – 8 Days / 07 Nights

Day 01: Paro – Thimphu

Arrive in Paro & transfer to Thimphu (55 km/1:30 hr drive), the modern capital town of Bhutan. Evening you will visit National Memorial Chorten. Overnight: Hotel

Day 02: Thimphu

After leisurely breakfast at hotel you will proceed to a guided tour of Thimphu visiting National Library, nearby Institute for Zhoring Chusum and Trashichhodzong (the impressive fortress/monastery houses Secretariat building). Late afternoon or early evening before dinner time visit Handicrafts Emporium. Overnight: Hotel

(Note: National library, Museum, & Zhoring Chusum remain close on Sat, Sun and Govt. holidays).

Day 03: Thimphu - Gangtey (150 kms, 4hr drive)

Enjoy a dramatic drive over the high mountain pass of Dochu La and on to the Phobjikha Valley passing through dense forests and oak, rhododendron tress. On arrival in Phobjikha Valley visit the striking Gangtey Goemba and stroll through the quaint Gangtey village. Overnight: Hotel

Day 04: Gangtey – Punakha (70 km, 3 hrs)

Half day explore serene valley of Phobjikha drive to Punakha through the dense forest of Rhododendrone, pine and spruce. Stop at Wangduephodrang Dzong to visit the majestic fort sitting on top of the hill at the confluence of Punakha Chhu and Tang Chhu rivers, the Dzong is town's most visible features.

After checking into hotel you will proceed to visit impressive Punakha Dzong, home to the remains of Bhutan's first ruler. Overnight: Hotel

Day 05: Punakha

After breakfast at hotel you will proceed to an easy hike to Chimi Lhakhang, situated on a hillock in the centre of the valley, is dedicated to Lama Drukpa Kuenley.

Afternoon hike up through fields of chilies, cabbages and rice along the banks of the Mo Chhu to the upper end of the valley and the Khamsum Yuelley Namgyal Chorten. Overnight: Hotel

Day 06: Punakha – Paro (125 kms, 4 hrs drive)

Return drive to Paro descending back down from Dochu 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.

After checking into hotel visit Ta Dzong (Sun & Mon closed): once a watchtower, built to defend Rinpung Dzong during inter-valley wars of the 17th century, Ta Dzong was inaugurated as Bhutan's National Museum in 1968. A walk through the bridge, over a stone inlaid path, offers a good view of the architectural wonder of the Dzong as well as life around it. It is also the venue of Paro Tshechu, held once a year in the spring. Overnight: Hotel

Day 07: Paro

After leisurely breakfast go for an excursion to Taktshang Monastery (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. 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.

Afternoon visit Drukgyel Dzong: This Dzong, with a delightful village nestling at its foot, was built in 1646 by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal to commemorate his victory over the Tibetan invaders. On a clear day, one can see the commanding view of Mount.

Drive a little further down the road towards Paro town to visit Kyichu Lhakhang: It is one of the oldest and most sacred shrines of the Kingdom dating back to 7th century. Overnight: Hotel

Day 08: Depart Paro

After leisurely breakfast you will be transferred to the airport for your onward flight.

Note: Contact us for attractive rates and any customized itinerary on Bhutan