

10 Days 9 Nights Bhutan Cultural Tour

Day 1: Singapore - Paro - Thimphu

Welcome to Bhutan, the Land of the Thunder Dragon!

Touching down at Paro International Airport. Today, we will take it easy to acclimatize to the altitude. Check into the hotel in Thimphu and have the first taste of Bhutanese cuisine.

[Some interesting places to visit:](#)

Thimphu Dzong is the largest Dzong, is also the seat of the office of the King of Bhutan.

Heritage Museum is dedicated to connecting people to the Bhutanese rural past through exhibition of artifacts used in rural households.

National Memorial Chorten was built in honor of the late King Jigme Dorji Wangchuk

Buddha Point at Kuensel Phodrang stands a 169 feet bronze statue of Buddha Dordenma, Vajra Throne Buddha symbolising indestructibility will be completed soon. Visitors can drive up to the Buddha point and view the tallest statue of Lord Buddha, the view of Thimphu valley from the Buddha point is spectacular and beautiful, especially at night.

Centenary Farmers' Market is a weekend market where most of the Thimphu population congregate on the banks of the river. Villagers from the valley and other nearby places come to sell their agriculture products.

Sangaygang is 15 minutes from the main city where the Bhutan broadcasting tower is stationed, to relish the beautiful scene of the whole of Thimphu City. On the way you can see Takin, the national animal of Bhutan.

Day 2: Thimphu to Punakha

We will head on to Punakha, the ancient capital of Bhutan in the morning via roads lined with scented pine and cedar forests, festooned with hanging lichen. The Punakha river is one of the biggest rivers in Bhutan. During spring and winter, the color of the river sparkles in beautiful jade colour.

Dochula Pass at 3,050m is a beautiful pass with its 108 Bhutanese stupas is the memorial site of fallen Bhutanese soldiers in the 1990s.

Chhimi Lhakhang is a 20 minute walk across terraced fields through the village of Sopsokha from the roadside to the small temple located on a hillock in the centre of the valley below Metshina. Ngawang Chogyel built the temple in 15th century after the 'Divine Madman' Drukpa Kuenlay built a small chorten there. It is a pilgrim site for barren women.

Punakha Dzong was built in 1637 and continues to be the winter home for the clergy, headed by the Chief Abbott, the Je Khenpo. It is a stunning example of Bhutanese architecture, sitting at the fork of two rivers, portraying the image of a medieval city from a distance. The dzong was destroyed by fire and glacial floods over the years but has been carefully restored and is now a fine example of Bhutanese craftsmanship.

Pho Chhu Suspension Bridge is a 3 and a half hour drive away.

Day 3: Punakha to Trongsa

Enroute to Bumthang is Trongsa, the ancestral home of the ruling dynasty.

Wangdue Phodrang is one of the major towns and district capital of Western Bhutan. It is the last town before central Bhutan. The district is famous for its fine bamboo work and its slate and stone carving. We will pause to view the Wangdue Phodrang Dzong that is dramatically perched on the spur of a hill. Built in 1638, this Dzong overlooks the confluence of the Tsang Chu and Dang Chu rivers.

Chendebji Chorten, also known as the Chorten Charo Kasho, is a Nepalese style like stupa like Swayambhunath or Buddhath built in the 19th century by a Tibetan Lama. It was built on the remains of an evil spirit that was tormenting the people of that region.

Trongsa, literally "New Town" in the Dzongkha language, is where the current monarchy originated from. Each King in the line of succession has held the post of Trongsa Penlop or Governor before donning the Raven Crown.

Trongsa Dzong was laid in the 16th century by Pema Lingpa and flourished during the 17th century under Shabdrung Ngwang Namgyal. The impressive fortress is a massive structure, its wall looming high above the winding Mangde Chu Valley, commanding the east-west road.

The Trongsa Museum (Taa Dzong) sits high above the valley at a strategic vantage point over Trongsa Dzong. The "Tower of Trongsa" tells the stories of the dzong and the valley that it has watched over for centuries. His Majesty the King inaugurated the Taa Dzong as a museum dedicated to the Wangchuk dynasty was another significant event as the nation celebrated 100 years of the monarchy. It has been restored into a classy museum that represents a tasteful blend of tradition and modernity. There are 224 items on display, include a sacred image of Sung Joenma Dorji Chang (self spoken Vajradharna), a bronze statue of Pema Lingpa, made by himself and a number of centuries old treasures like dance and ritual costumes and objects, ancient prayer books, paintings and scrolls and textiles.

Drive time is 5 hours.

Day 4: Bumthang

Bumthang is one of the most spectacular valleys in Bhutan and also the heartland of Buddhism in Bhutan. It is an area with a wide variety of fauna and flora. The Guru Rinpoche and his lineage of Tertons (treasure finders) making Bumthang his home have led to more than 40 temples being built in this peaceful valley.

Jambay Lhakhang was built in 659 by Tibetan King Sontsen Gampo to pin down a demoness who was obstructing the spread of Buddhism. The Jambay Lhakhang Drup is one of the most colourful festivals in Bhutan in October.

Kurjey Lhakhang is one of the most sacred monasteries in Bhutan. Built by the Guru Rinpoche in 1652, it houses a rock with his body imprint. Legend has it that Guru Rinpoche manifested as a Garuda to defeat the demon Shelging Karpo who had taken the form of a white lion.

We will drive to Tamshing Goemba, built in 1501 by the Buddhist saint Pema Lingpa. In the afternoon, we will hike up to Thangbi Valley, crossing a suspension bridge to visit the Thangbi Lhakhang built in the 14th century via an unpaved road.

Jakar Dzong is pitched on a high ground overlooking the town junction, built as a monastery in 1549 by the great grandfather of the Zhabdrung. It is now used as the administrative center for Bumthang district.

Day 5: Bumthang, visit Ura Valley

Ura Valley is one of the most tranquil and beautiful valleys. It is a must visit valley in Bumthang and there it stands the Ura Monastery in the midst of meadows, the beautiful landscapes, the buck wheat and barley fields.

Me-Bar Tsho (Burning Lake) is one of the most sacred sites in Bhutan. It is one of the holiest lakes in Bhutan where Tertön Pema Lingpa (Buddhist saint and treasure discoverer) dived into the lake while holding a burning butter lamp in one hand. Several hours later, he came out of the lake holding some relics in the other hand and the butter lamp was still burning. Thus the lake was called Me-Bar Tsho (Me-bar=Burning Tsho=Lake)

Day 6: Bumthang to Gangtey

The valley of Phobjikha is well known as the winter home of the black-necked cranes (*Grus nigricollis*). Bhutan is home to around six hundred black-necked cranes with Phobjikha being one of the popular places that the birds migrate to in the winter months from the Tibetan plateau. The elegant and shy birds can be observed from early November to end of March. Overlooking the Phobjikha valley is the Gangtey Goempa. This is an old monastery that dates back to 17th century.

Nature Hike along the valley of Phobjikha (estimated time – 2 hours)

Black-Necked Crane Information Centre has informative displays about the cranes and the valley environment, and offers powerful spotting scopes for visitors to verify against and against its pamphlet, 'Field Guide to Crane Behaviour'. If the weather is bad, you can browse the library and handicraft shop, and watch videos at 10am and 3pm (Nu 200). This is also the centre of the valley's fledgling ecotourism initiative and they can arrange mountain-bike hire (Nu 700 per day), a local guide (Nu 300), an overnight stay in a local farmhouse (Nu 500) or lectures on the local ecosystem.

Drive time is 5 hours.

Day 7: Gangtey to Paro

In the morning, walk along the valley.

Khewang Lhakhang is a late 15th century old temple built by Truelku Penjor Gyaltshen the reincarnation of Kuenkhen Longchen Rabjampa.

In the afternoon, we start our drive to Paro

Paro Valley is home to many of Bhutan's old monasteries and temples. This beautiful valley is also home to Mount Chomolhari (7,300 meters) situated at the northern end of the valley where glacier water formed.

The following are some of the prominent places to visit in Paro:

Paro Dzong, also known as Rinpung Dzong, is a 15th century massive fortress/monastery now an administrative center of the dzonkhag.

Ta Dzong that was built as a watch tower has since been turned into the national museum.

Drive time is 5 hours.

Day 8: Paro – Haa Valley

Excursion to Haa Valley is a drive to Haa through Chele La (3,988m). Starting early for the drive to Chele La (pass) at 3,988 m is the highest road pass in Bhutan, snaking upwards through blue pine and rhododendron forests for 35 kilometres. On a clear day the view sweeps away to the snow-dome of Bhutan's second highest peak Mt Jhomolhari (7,314m). This sacred prayer flag-bedecked pass has appeared in several Bhutanese films plus many fashion shoots in the past. From the pass you can see Paro valley on one side and Haa Valley on the other.

We walk down through the rhododendron forest to Kila Goemba, an ancient nunnery, before driving further down the mountain where we walk out to the Dzongdrakha Goemba complex (time permitting). Both locations are rarely visited by foreigners.

The day out include a picnic at Haa Valley.

Lhaxhang Nagpo is the Black Temple at Haa Valley. It's a very peaceful and tranquil place, suitable for meditation. The monastery was established in the 7th century by King Songtsen Gampo in his mission to build 108 monasteries in one day. It is situated towards the north of Lhaxhang Karpo. Legend has it that King Songtsen Gampo released a black and a white pigeon to select sites to build the temples. The black pigeon landed a little north of the white pigeon, indicating the preordained site of the present Lhaxhang Nagpo. The temple was named Nagpo (black) as it was built on the site where the black pigeon landed. Built on a lake, it has an opening in the floor of the temple serves as the channel to the underground lake. Lhaxhang Nagpo serves as the seat for the guardian deity Da Do Chen. The principal relic of the monastery is the Choe-Lung-truel Sum.

Drive time 1 hour to Chelela Pass plus an additional hour to Haa Valley.

Day 9: Paro

Taktsang Monastery is a prominent Himalayan Buddhist sacred site and temple complex located on the cliff side of Paro Valley. According to legends, the Guru Rinpoche flew to this location from Tibet on the back of a Tigress (his consort Yeshey Tshogyal) and meditated in one of the caves. Guru Rinpoche performed meditation and emerged in eight manifestations and the place became holy. Thus gaining the name Tiger's nest.

Snack at Taktsang while enjoying the view of the monastery as well as the view of the valley below.

Drukgyal Dzong are ruins north of Paro Valley of the great Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, father and unifier of medieval Bhutan built in 1647. the Dzong was destroyed by an accidental fire and left in ruins as an evocative reminder of the great victories it was built to commemorate.

Kyichu Lhaxhang is one of the oldest temples in Bhutan. Just like the Jambhay Lhaxhang in Bumthang, it is one of the 108 temples built by the Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo to subdue an ogres that was obstructing the spread of Buddhism. According to legend, all 108 temples were built in a single night.

Day 10: Paro to Singapore

Bid farewell to the Magical Kingdom in the Sky and head back to Singapore via Paro Airport

~ There may be some adjustments to the above due to weather and other unforeseen circumstances ~