

TRADITIONAL BHUTANESE WEDDING CEREMONY

Updated 22 May 2019

Dem Lhakhang at Paro Dzong

Paro Dzong is also known as Rinpung Dzong, which means “the fortress of a heap of jewels”. It is one of Bhutan’s most impressive and well-known dzongs. It is one of the finest examples of Bhutanese architecture. The inward-sloping walls forms a massive structure that towers over the town and it is visible as a great white monolith from vantage points throughout the valley. It is located on the hill to the left bank of Pa Chhu overlooking the broad valley. The dzong now serves as a central monastic and administrative seat of the province/district of Paro. It was built to defend the Paro valley from the Tibetan invasion. Dem Lhakhang at Paro Dzong where the Lhapsang and Thrisel ceremony will happen is in the main “Utse” or the central tower of Paro Dzong which is off limit to tourists as it is the most sacred temple in Paro Dzong.



Khadhar

The Groom will arrive before the bride at the Dzong. Bride will follow 10 minutes after the groom and will exchange the traditional white scarves or 'khadhar' at the temple entrance. The white colour scarf is symbolic of the purity of heart of the giver. The scarves feature symbols of the Buddhist eight lucky signs, which are meant to bring good fortune, wealth and happiness to the receiver.

Lhabsang

Before you arrive at the temple, the wedding ritual will already have begun with an early morning *lhabsang*: a spiritual cleansing performed by monks as an offering to the local deities. The Bhutanese believe that only if the deities are at peace, will we have their blessing for good health, wealth and a long life together.

Thrisel

On arrival, a Thrisel ceremony will be performed by the monks under the guidance of a revered lama. This is a blessing performed with holy water that cleanses the mind, spirit and body from the defilements of the ego.



Kyichu Lhakhang

The auspicious Kyichu Lhakhang is one of the oldest and most sacred temples in the Kingdom, dating back to when the seeds of Buddhism were sown in Bhutan. Kyichu is believed to be one of 108 temples built in a single day by the Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo in order to subdue a demon lying across Tibet and Bhutan.



Karme

After completing the Lhabsang and Thrisel ceremony at Dem Lhakhang, you will drive to the kingdom's oldest and the most sacred temple of Kyichu Lhakhang where you will light a series of butter lamps to increase your merit and to offer light to your own deities. The butter lamp or *karme* represents the dispelling of darkness and ignorance and bringing of wisdom and compassion to your lives.

Amankora

Chipdrel

As you arrive the final bend at Amankora, a ceremonial procession will be waiting to escort the wedding entourage to Amankora in a traditional Chipdrel procession to welcome the bride and groom back home at Amankora.



Marchang

The bride and groom will be received on the Amankora arrival platform where the Marchang ceremony will take place. Marchang is a traditional alcohol offering ceremony to welcome the bride and groom back home in Amankora.



Zhugdrel Phensum Tshogpa

This is followed by the *Zhugdrel Phensum Tshogpa* which is performed in the honour of the unifier of the Kingdom of Bhutan, Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel. This ceremony originated when the Zhabdrung first arrived in Punakha Valley in 1637 and hosted a meal consisting of a large variety of food and fruits. During the meal, special prayers dedicated to the Zhabdrung's spiritual lineage were recited. Following this auspicious day, Zhugdrel is celebrated by consuming and offering different food and drinks to your guardian deities for blessings and prosperity.

Changphoed

The ceremony will then be followed by a *changphoed*, a ritual in which *ara* (the local wine) is blessed and offered to the deities. The *ara*, served in a traditional wooden *phob* (cup) is shared between the bride and groom to symbolize the faith and commitment you are making to each other. This will be followed by sharing of blessed milk from a *phob* from the altar room for the same reason as the *ara*.

Tsepamey Choko

Tsepamey choko, performed in honour to Tsepamey, the God of longevity, is the next part of the wedding ceremony. This is an elaborate ritual where you will both be blessed by the *lama* (head monk) for a long and healthy marriage and life together.



Khadhar

After the Zhugdrel Phensum Tshogpa ceremony, offering khadhar (scarves) to the newlyweds will follow. The scarves feature symbols of the Buddhist eight lucky signs, which are meant to bring good fortune, wealth and happiness to the receiver.



The bride and groom will retire to their room for few minutes to freshen up while the guests proceed to the ring exchange venue.

Forest Wedding

Exchange of Ring

Ring exchange ceremony will take place in the pine forest in the Amankora lodge premise on returning from the temple. A monk will preside the ceremony of a 2 minute prayer session before the ring exchange.



Ring exchange will be concluded with caking cutting



Wedding Lunch

Lunch will be served after the ring exchange ceremony and the cake cutting. Weather permitting, Lunch will be served outside Amankora dining room and inside the dining room if it rains.



Wedding Dinner

Dinner will be preceded by Traditional dances with bonfire and drinks at the amankora arrival platform where dinner will be set up. Traditional Dances will be for about 40 minutes before the dinner with drinks and bonfire

Dinner will be served on the Amankora arrival platform set up in a traditional Bhutanese tent lit up with coloured lights, Chinese lanterns and bonfire.



Tashi Delek!

Happily Ever After

