



BHUTAN & BEYOND

Enticing Bhutan Tour – 10 days/9 nights 13 – 22 SEP 2024

After the awesome flight into Paro be amazed by the colour & spectacle of the [Thimphu & Gangtey Tshechu's](#). This small group tour, catering to a maximum of 8 persons, also features the remote beauty of the Phobjikha Valley; the splendour of the magnificent Punakha Dzong and culminates with a pilgrimage hike to the majestic Taktsang Monastery (Tigers Nest) in Paro valley.

This tour combines the very best the Kingdom of Bhutan has to offer in the west & central region.

Don't forget we guarantee our small group cultural tours will operate even if only 2 persons book & travel!

Tour Itinerary Overview.

- 3 nights Thimphu with sightseeing, hiking and shopping options.
- 2 nights Phobjikha valley for festival, hiking and exploring.
- 2 nights Punakha valley with monastery & Dzong visits.
- 2 nights Paro valley with Taktsang Monastery hike, shopping & sightseeing.

Reasons To Book This Small Group Tour

- We only take a maximum of 8 persons on our tours.
- Witness the spectacle of the Thimphu & Gangtey Tshechu's (festivals).
- We tailor our tours for less driving and more sightseeing!
- 20 years' experience, service & knowledge.
- Competitive pricing & well-constructed itineraries.
- Access to our exclusive travel app COMPANION
- Our comprehensive Bhutan Visitor Information planning guide.
- ATAS Accredited via our parent company MTA Travel.

CALL THE BHUTAN TRAVEL EXPERTS ON AUS [toll free](#), James – [0412 416 111](#), Nicola – [0413 598 669](#)

Tour Inclusions:

- English speaking guide, driver & private coach.
- All touring & transfers throughout your journey.
- Bhutanese style 3* hotel accom with private bathrooms.
- All meals (breakfast, lunch & dinner) including 2 bottles water daily.
- All monument, entrance fees, hiking & sightseeing.
- Bhutan visa fees & processing.
- Sustainable Development Fee (SDF) & local taxes.
- The spectacle of the Thimphu & Gangtey Tshechu's (festivals).
- Bank transfer & communication fees.
- Professionally operated by Bhutan Tourism Corp – BTCL.



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Tour Exclusions:

- Flights to/from Paro are additional.
- Personal items: phone calls, laundry, drinks etc.
- Tipping – we will advise your tipping regime.
- Travel Insurance – mandatory to enter Bhutan.
- Any COVID-19 PCR or RAT tests required.

Available On Request:

- Upgrade to Business Class on your flights.
- Ex-Australia airfares.
- Stopovers & additional Nepal & India arrangements.

Cancellation Conditions:

- Deposit date until 45 days prior arrival in Bhutan - Land tour deposit is refundable less B&B service fees.
- 45 days or less prior to arrival in Bhutan - No land tour refund permitted.

Please note: - These conditions cover land travel arrangements only, not airfares, which are subject to their own cancellation conditions.

Friday 13 September 24:

Paro Airport to Thimphu (1 hr 30 mins drive time)

After clearing immigration and customs you will be greeted by your BTCL guide and driver and transferred to Bhutan's capital Thimphu. Travelling through the spectacular countryside, en-route make a stop at the Tachogang Lhakhang (iron bridge). All the houses and buildings in the Kingdom are painted and constructed in traditional Bhutanese style.

On arrival in Thimphu take lunch at a local Bhutanese restaurant. This afternoon visit the Centenary markets, the National Memorial Chorten and the Takin Preserve, home to Bhutan's most unusual national mammal.

Overnight Thimphu – Bhutanese Style 3* Hotel

Saturday 14 September:

Thimphu Sightseeing & Festival

This morning visit the awesome Buddha Dordenma statue located at Kuenselphodrang. The statue is made of bronze and gilded in gold. It is considered the largest Buddha Shakyamuni statue in the world. There is also an excellent 3 km hike option through Kuenselphodrang Nature Park which offers sensational valley views.



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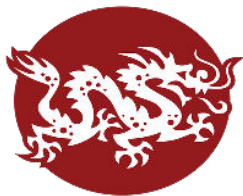


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Saturday 14 September - continued

Before travelling north up the valley to the majestic Trashichhoe Dzong to witness the colour & spectacle of the Thimphu Tshechu. Take either a picnic lunch and dine at the festival with the locals, or lunch at a local restaurant.

This afternoon visit the beautiful Tara Lhaden Zhingkhram Lhakhang (temple) nearby & enjoy some free time to explore the festival markets in Thimphu city.

Overnight Thimphu – Bhutanese Style 3* Hotel

Sunday 15 September:

Thimphu to Phobjikha Valley (4-5 hrs)

This morning you will be transferred by road eastwards to the Phobjikha Valley. En-route passing the Semtokha Dzong, built in 1629 & the oldest fortress of its kind that guarded the Thimphu valley, which today it is a monastery. Continue ascending to Dochu La (pass) to view the 108 Stupas, commissioned by a former Queen as a memorial to those who lost their lives during the low intensity conflict in late 2002 when Bhutan evicted Indian rebels camped in the jungle on the Bhutan – Indian border. On a clear day you will witness a breathtaking view of the eastern Himalaya.

When the recently restored Wangdue Phodrang Dzong comes into view, notice the large cacti that cover the hillside below which, were planted long ago to discourage invaders from climbing the steep slope to the Dzong. From the road view Rinchen gang, one of Bhutan's oldest villages, which did not have access to water, electricity or schooling until the early 1990's. The craftsmen of Rinchen gang are sought after for their skills in construction of Dzongs and Lhakhangs (temples).

Potatoes are Phobjikha's primary cash crop and mainly exported to India. Phobjikha is a glacial valley on the western slopes of the Black Mountains and is one of the most beautiful open valleys in Bhutan. It is also one of the most important wildlife preserves in the country and the winter home (late October to early February) of the rare black necked crane, which annually flies in from Tibet. There are also muntjaks (barking deer), wild boar, sambar, Himalayan black bear, leopard and red foxes.

Time permitting walk the Gangtey Nature Trail on arrival this afternoon. This is an easy, mainly flat, walk through forest and pastures.

Overnight Phobjikha Valley – Bhutanese Style 3* Hotel

Monday 16 September:

Sightseeing & festival visit in Phobjikha

Today you will visit the sacred Gangtey Goenpa (Monastery) to witness the Gangtey Tshechu enroute wander through Gangtey village.



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Monday 16 September - continued

This afternoon visit the Black Crane nature information centre & time permitting take an excursion further down the valley to the more remote Phobji region. Here you can enjoy an easy hike through villages, temples & farm houses.

Overnight Phobjikha Valley – Bhutanese Style 3* Hotel.

Tuesday 17 September:

Phobjikha Valley to Punakha Valley (2+ hrs)

Depart this morning to the Punakha Valley which holds the title as the winter capital because of its more temperate climate.

Arriving into Punakha check out the markets at Mesina. After that visit Chimi Lhakhang, a monastery built by Lama Drukpa Kuenley (also known as the Divine Madman or Mad Monk), which is a pleasant 20 minute walk across paddy fields. It is believed that childless women who visit the temple will conceive after receiving a “wang” (blessing) from the resident monk.

Take lunch at a local restaurant before an orientation tour of the valley. This includes the Sangchen Dorji Lhuendrup Lhakhang & Nunnery and the small village of Talo. Here you can wander through the serene grounds of the monastery with its beautiful gardens.

Overnight Punakha Valley – Bhutanese Style 3* Hotel.

Wednesday 18 September:

Exploring & hiking in the Punakha Valley

This morning perhaps enjoy a walk over the Punakha suspension bridge which offers excellent valley & river views, before a visit the dramatic Punakha Dzong, which formally served as the seat of the government and is still the winter residence of the Dratsheng (Central Monk Body). This is Bhutan’s most spectacular Dzong and an excellent example of how a medieval fortress and a centre of both monastic and administrative functions, has adapted and evolved for modern day use.

Choose to enjoy a relaxing afternoon at leisure or travel up the valley & take a fascinating hike to Khamsum Yulley Namgyel Chorten through fields of vegetables, rice paddies and tiny hamlets. This Chorten hold very special significance being consecrated in 1999 and dedicated to the protection of the former Crown Prince – today’s current King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck.

Overnight Punakha Valley – Bhutanese Style 3* Hotel



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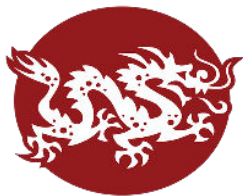


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Thursday 19 September:

Punakha to Thimphu (2 hrs 30 mins)

Morning departure from the beautiful Punakha and head back to the capital Thimphu, once again traversing Dochu La.

On arrival in Thimphu visit Zorig Chusum the Institute of the 13 Arts & Crafts of Bhutan where you can interact with the students followed by lunch at a local Bhutanese restaurant

This afternoon visit the celebrated Royal Textiles Academy & perhaps visit the Thimphu Post Office to get your personalized postage stamp printed. Remainder of the afternoon at leisure.

Overnight Thimphu – Bhutanese Style 3* Hotel

Friday 20 September:

Thimphu to Paro Valley (1 hr 30 mins)

Enjoy a leisurely start today before a mid-morning transfer to the Paro Valley. On arrival take lunch at a local restaurant.

This afternoon enjoy an orientation tour of the major features in Paro town including the Rinpung Dzong, with its cantilever bridge. Also visit the National Museum here you will view the fine collection of ancient Thangkha paintings, textiles, weapons and other artefacts.

Finally we recommend a wander along the main streets which offer good shopping for jewellery and handicrafts.

Overnight Paro Valley – Bhutanese Style 3* Hotel

Saturday 21 September:

Hiking & Sightseeing in the Paro Valley

This morning make a pilgrimage hike to the Taktsang Monastery, also known as Tigers Nest. This is Bhutan's most revered monastery and all Bhutanese Buddhists strive to make the pilgrimage here at least once in their lives. With each step, merit points are gained for the next part of life's journey.

Choose between a 2 hour round trip hike to the monastery viewpoint or a longer 5 hour, and more strenuous hike, into the monastery itself. Tigers Nest clings impossibly to a cliff of rock at 800 m above the valley floor and where Guru Rinpoche flew on the back of a tigress to subdue the local demons followed by 3 months meditation in a cave still visible in the monastery. In 1998 the monastery was seriously damaged by fire and has since been painstakingly reconstructed to its



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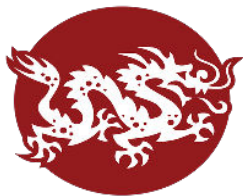


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Saturday 21 September - continued

original condition and consecrated by the 4th King in 2005. Take lunch at the viewpoint cafe which offers good Bhutanese vegetarian dishes.

This afternoon visit Kyichu Lhakhang – one of Bhutan's oldest and most beautiful temples, boasting an orange tree that perpetually bears fruit, before choosing a further visit to Paro town or spending the rest of the afternoon relaxing at the hotel.

Overnight Paro Valley – Bhutanese Style 3* Hotel

Sunday 22 September:

Day of departure

Morning departure from your hotel to Paro Airport for your onward flight.

END OF TOUR



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