



BHUTAN & BEYOND

Bhutan Mini Explorer Itinerary – 8 nights

Best duration Bhutan private tour, featuring the delightful Phobjikha valley.

- This private tour visits 4 different valleys Thimphu, Phobjikha, Punakha & Paro & features the most important sights in Thimphu city; the remote beauty of the Phobjikha valley & the splendour of the magnificent Punakha Dzong. Finally, a special pilgrimage hike to Taktsang Monastery (Tigers Nest) in Paro.
- This tour optimises valuable time to see the best sites in each valley.
- The itinerary detailed below is designed for private travellers and can be tailored to suit your exact requirements.
- All hiking is optional, though you must be able to climb a steep set of stairs to gain entry to the magnificent Punakha Dzong.

Tour Itinerary Overview.

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

CALL THE BHUTAN TRAVEL EXPERTS ON James – [0412 416 111](tel:0412416111), Nicola – [0413 598 669](tel:0413598669)

Why Book with Bhutan & Beyond?

- Bhutan & Beyond are Bhutan experts with 22 years' experience, service & knowledge.
- Bhutan & Beyond has access to Bhutan's very best Bhutanese guides.
- This private tour affords you time to immerse yourself in the vibrant Buddhist culture of Bhutan.
- We offer the option to choose between [HALF BOARD](#) or [FULL BOARD](#) land package.
- Competitive pricing and [luxury hotel](#) upgrade options.
- Option to substitute [3*](#) hotels for [farm home stays](#) in some valleys.
- Exceptionally well-constructed & flexible itineraries to suit your personal requirements.
- All hiking in Bhutan is optional though you must be able to climb a steep set of stairs to gain entry to the magnificent Punakha Dzong.
- Experts at combining Bhutan with [India](#) & [Nepal](#).
- ATIA (formerly ATAS) Accredited via our parent company MTA Travel.
- Access to our exclusive & celebrated travel app COMPANION.
- We provide a comprehensive pre-departure Bhutan visitor guide which is regularly updated & full support from Bhutan & Beyond.



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Your Bhutan **FULL BOARD** Land Package Inclusions:

- Personal guide & driver with SUV or minibus.
- All touring & transfers throughout.
- Traditional 3-star hotels with private bathrooms.
- All meals (breakfast lunch dinner) and two 500 ml bottles of water per person daily.
- All sightseeing as per your itinerary.
- All monument & entrance fees.
- Government Sustainable Development Fee (SDF) & local taxes.
- Bhutan visa fees & processing.
- Bhutan & Beyond bank transfers for payments to Bhutan suppliers.
- Professionally operated by Bhutan Tourism Corp.
- Comprehensive Bhutan visitor guide & full support from Bhutan & Beyond.
- ATAS Accredited via our parent company MTA Travel
- Access to our exclusive travel app COMPANION

Your Bhutan **FULL BOARD** Land Package Excludes:

- Airfares to/from Bhutan.
- Personal bank charges incurred making payments to Bhutan & Beyond.
- Personal items incl laundry, drinks, designer coffee's telephone calls, tips etc.
- Upgrade costs for luxury hotels are additional.
- Travel Insurance - is essential when travelling to Bhutan.
- Any COVID-19 PCR or RAT tests required.

*The additional exclusions when travelling on a **HALF BOARD** basis is lunch is at your own expense (please budget @US\$ 10-12 pp per day) along with all monument and entrance fees.*

Optional Activities:

Please ensure your travel insurance covers you for these activities.

- White Water Rafting – Punakha Valley. From US\$125.00 for up to 5 persons.
- Archery in Paro @ US\$7.00 pp.
- Mountain bike hire in Paro & Thimphu from US\$30 pp per ½ day.
- Cooking class at Paro farmhouse & hot stone bath US\$25.00 per person
- Hot stone bath at Paro Farmhouse US\$18.00 per person.



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Cancellation Conditions – Land Tour:

- 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.

Day 1:

Paro Valley to Thimphu Valley (1 hr 30 mins, altitude 2350 m)

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. All the houses and buildings in the Kingdom are painted and constructed in traditional Bhutanese style.

On arrival into Thimphu check-in to your hotel and take lunch. Enjoy the remainder of the day to explore Thimphu, both by vehicle and on foot. Your options include visits to the National Memorial Chorten; the celebrated Royal Textile Academy (closed Sun/PH) and the Takin Preserve – home to Bhutan's most unusual national mammal.

Overnight Thimphu – [Bhutanese Style 3* Hotel](#)

Day 2:

Exploring in Thimphu.

Today we highly recommend you visit the following.

The Buddha Dordenma statue located at Kuenselphodrang (just outside the city). 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 the adjacent Kuenselphodrang Nature Park which offers sensational valley views.

View the majestic Trashichhoe Dzong, (visits are only possible after business hours on weekdays or at the weekend) the Houses of Parliament, Royal Residences & Supreme Court building. Followed by a visit to 'Simply Bhutan' display village including a traditional Bhutanese lunch. At 'Simply Bhutan' you can experience ara tasting (local spirit); suja tasting (butter tea); try your hand at archery and enjoy a cultural performance of song & dance, plus much more.

Other recommended places to visit, depending on your preference, & in consultation with your guide are.



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- Zorig Chusum – the Institute of the 13 Arts & Crafts of Bhutan (closed Sat/Sun/PH & sometimes closed to visitors at other times.)
- The National Library, which holds a vast collection of ancient Buddhist manuscripts. (closed Sat/Sun & PH)
- Hand-made paper making factory. (closed Sun & PH)
- The Folk Heritage Museum. (closed PH)
- Nado incense factory (closed Sat/Sun & PH)
- Institute of Traditional Medicine – visitors only permitted to the museum & library. (closed Sat/Sun & PH)
- Visit the Thimphu Post Office to get your personalized postage stamp printed. (Mon-Fri & Sat am)
- The daily Centenary farmer's market for fresh produce includes the sale of clothing & homewares & souvenirs (Fri-Sun).
- Take a wander along Thimphu's main street, Norzin Lam, which offers good shopping
- The Craft Bazaar which focuses on Bhutanese produced handicrafts
- For those interested in quality weavings and local art visit the Gagyel Lhundrup weaving centre. Here you can interact with the weavers. (closed Sun & PH)
- The S. Bishwa art gallery is also worth a visit.
- The city bars & coffee shops are also worth checking out. Your guide will advise you the best options.
- Travel up the valley & hike to Tango Monastery which houses a university of Buddhism for monks.
- There are other 1/2 day/ day hikes possible in the Thimphu valley & your guide will recommend suitable hike options depending on the season and your prior hiking experience.

Overnight Thimphu – Bhutanese Style 3* Hotel.

Day 3:

Thimphu to Phobjikha Valley (4+ hrs, alt 2900 m)

This morning you will be transferred by road eastwards to the Phobjikha Valley. En-route pass the Semtokha Dzong. This was built in 1629 & is the oldest fortress of its kind that guarded the Thimphu valley. 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. This was 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. Depending on the time of the year the vista can vary from alpine snow (November – February) to a profusion of blossoms (March – May).

When the Wangdue Phodrang Dzong comes into view notice the large cacti that cover the hillside below. These were planted long ago to discourage invaders from climbing the steep slope to the Dzong. From the road view Rinchengang, one



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of Bhutan's oldest villages, which did not have access to water, electricity or schooling until the early 1990's. The craftsmen of Rinchengang 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. Furthermore, it is also one of the most important wildlife preserves in the country. It is 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.

Overnight Phobjikha Valley – [Bhutanese Style 3* Hotel.](#)

Day 4:

Sightseeing & Hiking in Phobjikha.

While you are in Phobjikha you will visit the Black Crane nature information centre and the sacred Gangtey Monastery, also enjoy time to wander through Gangtey village and hike the Gangtey Nature Trail.

There are many additional hikes available in this beautiful valley and your guide will advise you the best options. One is the remote Phobji area further up the valley. Here you can take an easy, flat hike through temples, farmhouses and small villages.

Overnight Phobjikha Valley – [Bhutanese Style 3* Hotel.](#)

Day 5:

Phobjikha Valley to Punakha Valley. (2+ hrs, alt 1310 m)

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

After lunch enjoy an orientation tour of the valley including the Sangchen Dorji Lhuendrup Lhakhang & Nunnery and, visit to the small very traditional village of Talo where you can wander through the serene grounds of the monastery with its beautiful gardens.

Overnight Punakha Valley – [Bhutanese Style 3* Hotel.](#)



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Day 6:

Exploring & hiking in Punakha.

This morning you have the option of a hike across the Punakha suspension bridge, the longest in Bhutan, before visiting the dramatic Punakha Dzong, which formerly served as the seat of the government and is still the winter residence of the Dzatsheng (Central Monk Body). Furthermore it is an excellent example of how a medieval fortress, and a centre of both monastic and administrative functions, has evolved for modern day use. While in Punakha don't forget to visit Kaja Throm the daily fresh fruit & vegetable market.

After lunch at a local restaurant, we recommend a fascinating hike to Khamsum Yulley Namgyel Chorten. The hiking trail is through fields of vegetables, rice paddies and tiny hamlets. This Chorten holds very special significance. It was 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.

Day 7:

Punakha Valley to Paro Valley (4 hrs + alt 2250 m)

Depart Punakha early this morning for your transfer westwards to the Paro Valley. Once again traversing Dochu La and arriving in Paro for lunch at a local restaurant.

This afternoon enjoy an orientation tour of the major features in Paro town. These include Rinpung Dzong, with its cantilever bridge, and the National Museum. Here you will view the fine collection of ancient Thangkha paintings, textiles, weapons and other artefacts, before a visit to the CSI daily market which offers locally produced goods from cottage and small industries in Bhutan. Time permitting, we recommend a wander along the main streets which offer good shopping for jewellery and handicrafts.

Overnight Paro Valley – [Bhutanese Style 3* Hotel](#).

Day 8:

Sightseeing & hiking in the Paro Valley.

Early this morning take a pilgrimage hike to the very revered Taktsang Monastery, also known as Tigers Nest. All Bhutanese Buddhists strive to make this pilgrimage at least once in their lives. Each step they take on the trail counts accrues merit points for their future. Choose between a 1.5 hour round trip hike to the Monastery viewpoint, or a longer 5 hour (and more strenuous) hike into the Monastery itself.



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Tigers Nest clings impossibly to a cliff of rock at 800 m above the valley floor and is where Guru Rinpoche flew on the back of a tigress to subdue the local demons. That was 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 original condition and consecrated by the 4th King in 2005.

Returning from the hiking trail, continue down the valley to view the recently restored Drugyel Dzong (14km from Paro). This is the historical site of the Fort of Drukpa Victory, from which the Bhutanese used to repel the Tibetan invaders again and again. Followed by a visit to Kyichu Lhakhang – one of Bhutan’s oldest and most beautiful temples boasting an orange tree that perpetually bears fruit.

Overnight Paro Valley – Bhutanese Style 3*Hotel.

Day 9:

Day of departure.

Early morning departure from your hotel to Paro Airport for your onward flight.

END OF TOUR



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