



## Journey Through Bhutan - 8 Days

Day	Destination
	Paro
	Thimphu
	Punakha
	Paro

### Day 1: Day 1: Arrive Paro – Thimphu

Fly into Paro where you will be received by your Trail Blazer Tours Representative, who will transfer you to Thimphu (55km, approx. 1.1/2-hour drive) (Altitude 2,320 m)

The flight to Paro is one of the most spectacular in entire Himalayas. Whether flying along the Himalayan range from Kathmandu or over the foothills from Kolkatta, the journey offers fascinating views and an exciting descent into the Kingdom. Bhutan's first gift as you disembark from the aircraft will be cool, clean fresh mountain air. After immigration formalities and baggage collection, you will be met by our representative, and afterwards drive to Thimphu, the capital town of Bhutan with en-route stop at Chuzom, the confluence of Thimphu and Paro rivers. Three different style of stupas; Tibetan, Nepalese and Bhutanese adorn this confluence.

On arrival, in Thimphu check-into the hotel. The capital town of Bhutan and the centre of government, religion and commerce, Thimphu is a unique city with unusual mixture of modern development alongside ancient traditions. With the population of about 1,00,000 it is perhaps still the world's only capital city without a traffic light.

Later visit **Trashichhoedzong**, 'fortress of the glorious religion'. This is the center of government

and religion, site of monarch's throne room and seat of Je Khenpo or Chief Abbot. Built in 1641 by the political and religious unifier of Bhutan, Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, it was reconstructed in 1960s in traditional Bhutanese manner, without nails or architectural plans.

Evening an exploratory walk around Thimphu main street and market area.

## Day 2: Day 2: Thimphu

After breakfast, drive to **Buddha Point (Kuensel Phodrang)**. Located at a short drive from Thimphu city centre, visitors can get a good overview of the Thimphu valley from the Buddha point (Kuensel Phodrang). You can pay your obeisance and offer prayers to the Buddha, the largest statue in the country and then walk around and take a glimpse of the valley.

Then, visit **King's Memorial Chorten** continuously circumambulated by people, murmuring mantras and spinning their prayer wheels. Construction of this landmark was the idea of Bhutan's third king, His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuk ("the father of modern Bhutan") who has wished to erect monument to world peace and prosperity. Completed in 1974 after his untimely death, it serves both as a memorial to the Late King and as a monument to peace.

**Textile Museum** (closed on Government Holidays) next in schedule is worth a visit to experience the living national art of weaving. Exhibitions introduce the major weaving techniques, styles of local dress and textiles made by women and men.

Post lunch **visit Folk Heritage Museum** (closed on Government holidays). This Museum is dedicated to connecting people with the rich Bhutanese Folk heritage and rural history through exhibits, demonstrations, educational programs and documentation of Bhutanese rural life.

Later visit **Institute for Zorig Chusum**, commonly known as Arts & Crafts School or Painting School, the Institute offers a six-year course on the 13 traditional arts and crafts of Bhutan. On a visit, one can see students learning the various skills taught at the school.

Then, drive to **Takin Preserve**. The Takin is national animal of Bhutan and looks like a cross between a cow and goat.

Evening time can be spent strolling through the government-run **Handicrafts Emporium and local crafts bazaar**, to browse through example of Bhutan's fine traditional arts. Here you can buy hand-woven textiles, thangkha paintings, masks, ceramics, slate and wood carvings, jewelry, interesting items made from local materials.

## Day 3: Day 3: Thimphu – Punakha

After breakfast, drive to Punakha across Dochu La. Located at a height of 3,088m/ 10,130 ft, Dochula is a scenic location with chorten, mani wall, and prayer flags which decorate this highest point on the road. If skies are clear, it may be possible to see the following peaks from this pass in the order left to right: Masagang (7,158m), Tsendagang (6,960m), Terigang (7,060m ), Jejegangphugang (7,158 m), Kangphugang (7,170 m ), Zongphugang (7, 060 m ), a table mountain that dominates the isolated region of Lunana – finally Gangkar puensum, the highest peak in Bhutan at 7,497m.

Afternoon visit **Punakha Dzong** or (Palace of Great Happiness), built in 1637 by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, at the junction of the Phochu and Mochu rivers. This majestic dzong served as both the religious and the administrative center of Bhutan in the past. It measures some 600 by 240 feet and has a six-story, gold-domed tower. Inside are courtyards and religious statuary that hint at the depth of history and spiritual tradition embodied here. Your guide will illuminate your understanding of this intricate culture that is exotic to us, though long established here.

Later in the day excursion to **Chimi Lhakhang**.

The Chimi Lhakhang, situated on a hillock in the centre of the valley, is also known as the temple of fertility. It is widely believed that couples who do not have children and wanting one, if they pray at this temple, they are usually blessed with a child very soon. A walk through the village near the temple will give you rare glimpses into the daily life and lifestyle of the villagers.

## **Day 4: Day 4: Punakha**

After breakfast, take a hike to the regal Khamsum Yuelley Namgel Chorten, which was built to remove negative forces and promote peace, stability and harmony in the changing world. The Chorten dominates the upper Punakha Valley with commanding views across the Mo Chhu and up towards the mountainous peaks of Gasa and beyond.

Later take an excursion to Talo village, which is scattered along the hill slopes and known for its cleanliness and hygiene among Punakha villages. Talo is the seat of the mind incarnations of the Zhabdrung. Talo Sangnacholing Dzong is built on a plateau and has majestic view of surrounding villages.

The beautiful farmhouses of the village have its own flower gardens and on the hill slope corns and sweet peas are grown in abundance. Spend time at Nobgang and Talo villages visiting farmhouses and meeting families, experiencing Bhutanese rural life.

On the way, visit Sangchen Dorji Lhuendrup Lhakhang Nunnery. Perched on a ridge amid pine trees and overlooking valleys of Punakha and Wangdue gleams Sangchen Dorji Lhuendrup temple. It houses a 14-foot main bronze statue of Avalokiteshvara and of Guru Padsambhava, Gautam Buddha, Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, Tsela Namsum, the 21 Taras and Tsepamay (Buddha of longevity). The temple complex also houses a permanent higher learning and meditation centre for nuns where, apart from religious training, it provides life skill training such as tailoring, embroidery, statue making and thangha painting.

## **Day 5: Day 5: Punakha – Paro**

After breakfast return to Paro with a stop enroute at **Simtokha Dzong**, one of the oldest fortresses of the country and known as the place of profound tantric teaching. This dzong now houses a school for the study of the Dzongkha language.

Later in the day after checking into hotel, proceed to visit **Ta Dzong**, (closed on Government holidays) originally built as Watchtower, which now houses National Museum. The extensive collection includes antique thangha paintings, textiles, weapons & armour, household objects and a rich assortment of natural and historic artifacts.

Then walk down the trail to visit **Rinpung Dzong**, meaning (“fortress of the heap of jewels”), which has a long and fascinating history. Along the wooden galleries lining the inner courtyard are fine wall paintings illustrating Buddhist lore such as four friends, the old man of long life, the wheel of life, scenes from the life of Milarepa, Mount. Sumeru and another cosmic Mandala.

Evening local dress wearing session at the hotel: The National dress of Bhutan is one of the most distinctive and visible aspects of Dragon Kingdom’s unique character. Men wear Gho, a long robe similar to Tibetan Chhuba, that is raised till knee, folded backwards and then tied around the waist by Kera (belt). While women wear, ankle length robe called Kira. The Bhutanese textile is made from fine, hand-woven or milled fabric, with the colorful distinctive patterns.

## Day 6: Day 6: Paro

After breakfast excursion to **Taktshang Monastery** (approx.. 5 hours round trip walk). It is one of the most famous of Bhutan’s monasteries, perched on the side of a cliff 900m above the Paro valley floor. It is said that Guru Rinpoche arrived here on the back of a tigress and meditated at this monastery and hence it is called ‘Tiger’s Nest’. This site has been recognized as a most sacred place and visited by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal in 1646 and now visited by all Bhutanese at least once in their lifetime.

Late afternoon, drive end of the Valley to the base of **Drukgyel Dzong**, a 17th century fortress burned down in the early 50s. Here we will also see the beautiful **typical farmhouse**. Bhutanese farmhouses are very colorful, decorative and traditionally built without the use of single nail. The majority of the population of Bhutan continues to live as it has for centuries – in small isolated farms and hamlets, surrounded by terraced fields of rice, maize and buckwheat.

While driving to Paro town, stop en route at the 7th century **Kyichu Lhakhang**, one of the 108 temples built in the Himalayas by Tibetan King, Songtsen Gampo. The building of this temple marks the introduction of Buddhism in Bhutan.

## Day 7: Day 7: Paro

After breakfast drive to Chelela pass. Located at an elevation of 3,988 meters, Chelela is considered to be one of the highest motorable passes in Bhutan. About an hour’s drive along a thickly forested road, this Pass is a botanical paradise, providing stunning views of the sacred mountain Jomolhari and Jichu Drake. It is also marked by hundreds of prayer flags fluttering in the wind.

From Chelela, embark on a fascinating excursion to Kila Gompa, a nunnery perched on a steep cliff face at 3500m. This staggering site manages to house 7 small temples and about 70 nuns. From Chelela pass, the Gompa is about an hour walk amidst magnificent wooded area.

Later in the day witness / participate in Archery demonstration. Archery is the national sport of Bhutan and every village has its own archery range. Using bamboo bows (although modern compound bows are now common in cities) team of archers shoot at targets only 30 centimetres in diameter from a distance of 120 meters. Archery competition are among the most picturesque and colorful events in the country and are the integral part of all festivities.

## **Day 8: Day 8: Paro – Departure**

At an appropriate time, your Trail Blazer Tours Representative will assist and transfer you to the airport for the onward flight.

### **About Tour**

In this Bhutan Highlights tour you'll spend seven days exploring this magical Himalayan kingdom. It take you through the spectacular mountain terrain, varied flora and fauna and its unique ancient Buddhist monasteries & Archery Demonstartion.

### **Highlights**

#### **Culture**

- Explore the cities of Punakha, Paro and Thimpu
- Museums
- Hike to Tigers Nest
- Archery Demonstration
- Visit to Cheela Pass
- Visit to the monasteries