



# Best of Bhutan

Culture, Nature & Hiking

**Tour Length: 8N/9D**

**Difficulty: Easy/Moderate**

**Route: Paro - Thimphu - Punakha - Tangsibji - Bumthang - Paro**

**Max Altitude: 3,140 m**

**Trip Style: A cultural, scenic soft adventure**

**Group Size: Minimum: 2 pax | Maximum: 12 pax**

The Classic Bhutan tour is a customised trip designed to give you an unparalleled insight into Bhutan, its culture, nature, people and the Bhutanese way of life. The tour starts in the capital city of Thimphu where you will explore the sights, sounds and culture of this striking city. From Thimphu you will head out into the countryside to explore the valleys of Thimphu and Punakha on foot, before returning to Paro valley to end your trip at Bhutan's iconic Tiger's Nest Monastery.

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## Day 1 (B L D)

### **Fly Kathmandu to Paro, cultural introductions in Thimphu**

The flight from Kathmandu to Paro is one of the Himalaya's all-time classics. Snow peaks roll past the window: Everest, Kanchenjunga, Jomolhari and Jichu Drakey; before the aircraft drops low into Paro valley. You'll spot the Pa Chu snaking its way beneath Paro Dzong (fortress) as the valley opens into view. Your guide will meet you on arrival and lead the one-hour drive to Thimphu, pausing at Tamchog Lhakang where a restored iron bridge, crafted with original 13th-century chain links, hangs lightly over the river.

After checking into your hotel, there's time to decompress before heading out in the afternoon to Thimphu's cultural highlights. You'll begin at the Memorial Chorten, a revered stupa built in honour of Bhutan's third king. From here, you move to the Folk Heritage Museum, a restored 19th-century farmhouse that gives a window into rural home life, and then to the Royal Textile Museum & Academy – the country's proud showcase of weaving traditions. You'll end the day wandering the Crafts Bazaar, a ribbon of stalls with locally made textiles, carvings and handicrafts. Dinner features classic Bhutanese flavours.

Overnight in Thimphu.

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## Day 2 (B L D)

### **Dochula Pass, Trans-Bhutan Trail walk & Chhimi Lhakhang**

Today you'll get out of the city and into the countryside. After breakfast, you'll drive to Dochula Pass (3,140m). Situated atop the pass with a backdrop of Himalayan vistas and fluttering prayer flags are the Druk Wangyal Chortens, a collection of 108 chortens (stupas) that were built to exemplify the greatness of the Fourth King. You'll then drive to Lamperi, where you'll have the opportunity to hike a short section of the Trans-Bhutan Trail, an old heritage trail that was recently restored, descending to Thinleygang village. This trail goes through dense ancient forests that are good for birds and rhododendrons when in season, while passing through scenic villages. A picnic lunch will be waiting for you at the end of the walk overlooking the valley's paddy fields.

After lunch, you'll drive to the low-lying rice valley of Lobesa and pay your respects to one of Bhutan's most charming and eccentric historic figures nicknamed 'The Divine Madman' at the Chhimi Lhakhang, also called the fertility monastery. The visit involves a short hike through a beautiful village surrounded by paddy fields. Here you'll visit local artist who specialised in Thangka painting; Tibetan Buddhist painting on cotton, silk appliqué, usually depicting a Buddhist deity, scene, or mandala. Overnight in Punaka.

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## Day 3 (B L D)

### **Khamsum Yuelley Namgyal hike, riverside picnic & Punakha Dzong**

This morning you will drive to Punakha valley to visit Khamsum Yuelley Namgyal stupa, which involves a 45-minute scenic hike through paddy fields to the hill top where the stupa is situated. From here you can also enjoy a majestic view of the underlying valley. The temple itself is a splendid example of Bhutan's fine architectural and artistic traditions and is the only one of its kind in the world. Back at the river, you'll board a boat for a gentle float downstream; a serene way to absorb village life and spot Bhutan's bird species. Lunch will be a picnic at Zomlingthang, a riverside clearing often used by locals for archery, the national sport.

After lunch you'll drive to Punakha Dzong, the most beautiful fortress in Bhutan, situated at the confluence of two rivers. This ancient fortress is the winter residence of the monastic order's leadership and still serves as the administrative headquarters for the Punakha region.

From Punakha Dzong, you'll head to Phobjikha (Gangtey) following the scenic Dang Chuu (river), climbing through

forests of bamboo and oak and just before crossing Pele La pass, you take a small side road off into the hidden Phobjikha Valley. Overnight in Phobjikha.

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#### **Day 4 (B L D)**

##### **Gangtey nature trail, Gangtey Gompa & overnight in Tangsibji**

After breakfast you'll head off on a beautiful nature hike. This easy 1-2-hour walk will take you through pine forests and open vistas looking out across the wooded slopes of the valley. This valley is different from others as it's a glacial valley and home to the endangered Black-necked cranes who visit during the winter from the Tibetan plateau, resulting in it being a protected habitat for the birds. It's other claim to fame, is that it is the potato basket of Bhutan, thereby creating a great example of how agriculture and conservation work hand in hand. You will end the hike with a visit to the famous Gangtey Gonpa Monastery.

After lunch, you will drive to Pelela and if you are up for it, there is an optional 2-hour hike to Longtey on the Trans-Bhutan Trail. From here you will drive to the village of Tangsibji for an authentic rural Bhutan experience, staying overnight in a heritage farmhouse, hosted by two times winner of Bhutan's Strongest Man competition.

Overnight in Trongsa.

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#### **Day 5 (B L D)**

##### **Village immersion, Trongsa Dzong & arrival in Bumthang**

After breakfast you will have the opportunity to explore your host village, gaining an authentic experience of rural Bhutanese life. After lunch, you'll say goodbye to your host family and drive to Bumthang Valley via Trongsa town.

You'll stop in Trongsa to visit the Tower of Trongsa Museum, an old watchtower converted to a museum highlighting the establishment of Bhutan's monarchy and its royal dynasty. From here you'll visit the Trongsa fortress, a historically important fortress, as it was the central seat of the administration from where Bhutan's monarchy was institutionalised in the early 1900s.

Your last stop of the day before heading to your guesthouse will be the Chumey Valley visit the famous textile weavers of Bumthang known for their Yatha textiles made out of yak wool. Overnight in Bumthang.

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#### **Day 6 (B L D)**

##### **Monasteries of Bumthang, Jakar Dzong & local food experience**

After breakfast you'll have the opportunity to explore the Chamkhar Valley on foot, starting off with what is believed to be the country's oldest Buddhist temple, the 7th century Jambay Lhakhang temple, built by King Songsen Goempo of Tibet in his bid to spread the Buddha's dharma by building 108 monasteries across the Himalayas. This is one of two temples built in Bhutan. From here you'll proceed to visit Kurjey Monastery which is considered as one of the most sacred shrines in the country as the Guru Rinpoche left a body print in his meditation cave.

After lunch at a local farmhouse, you'll continue the short hike to visit Tamshing Lhakhang, founded in 1501 by Terton Pema Lingpa, one of the greatest Bhutanese saints. Each of these cultural hot-spots has its own history and stories that bear much significance to Bhutan's traditions and cultural identity.

Your next stop will be the Jakar Dzong fortress followed by an evening stroll around town, where you will have the opportunity to visit a local handloom weaving house and should you wish, also visit the cheese factory to see how local Gouda cheese is made and to try the locally made Red Panda beer, which is actually white. Bumthang is known for its unique local cuisine and so tonight you'll dine at a local restaurant while enjoying the locally made white Red Panda beer. Overnight in Bumthang.

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## Day 7 (B L D)

### Fly Bumthang to Paro, cultural sites & hot-stone bath

This morning you'll hop on a short 30-minute domestic flight back to Paro. The views from the plane are breath taking, showing the Himalayan mountain ranges of northern Bhutan.

Today you'll continue to explore the cultural highlights of Paro, with the first stop being the Dungtse Lhakhang, a unique temple built in the form of a chorten, one of the very few that exist in Bhutan. The Lhakhang was built in 1421 by the famous Tibetan lama, Thongten Gyelpo (1385-1465) who was also known as Changzampa, or the builder of iron bridges.

After lunch, you'll visit the Paro Rinpung Dzong fortress which overlooks the beautiful Paro River and then on to the National Museum where you can immerse yourself in the rich history and heritage of Bhutan. Your last monastery of the day will be Kyichu Lhakhang, the sister temple of Jambay Lhakhang in Bumthang, built during the 8<sup>th</sup> century and home to the original statue of Jowo Jamba, a sculpture that is so sacred it is said that the mere sight of it can bring peace to one's soul.

This evening, you'll visit a heritage farmhouse to experience the traditional hot-stone bath and dine on local cuisine unique to this valley. Overnight in Paro.

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## Day 8 (B L D)

### Tiger's Nest Monastery & heritage sites of Paro

Today you'll experience Bhutan's most famous attraction and perhaps the biggest highlight of the trip, an excursion to the famous Taktshang Monastery, or Tiger's Nest Monastery. The monastery was built in 1692 by a prominent historical figure named Gyaltse Tenzin Rabgye, whose reincarnation is now a young teenager and already a prominent figure in the clergy. It is slow climb to the monastery, covering over 800 steps, but well worth the effort. It is possible to hire a pony (at additional cost) to take you half way, but the final half is only accessible by foot.

On the way back to Paro you will have the opportunity to visit the ruins of Drugyal Dzong fortress, important to Bhutanese heritage as it served as a strategic watchtower and fortress that helped repel numerous Tibetan invasions in the 1600s. The peak of Jumolhari, Mountain of the Goddess (7,329m) can be seen from here on a clear day. Your last stop for the day, before heading back to your hotel will be the Rimpung Dzong, or Fortress of the Heap of Jewels, built in the year 1644 by Zhabdrung, a dynamic political and spiritual leader.

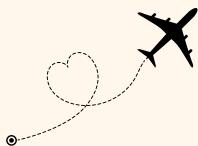
Once back at your hotel and after you have freshened up, it will be time for your farewell dinner and last opportunity to explore the streets and shops of Paro. Overnight in Paro.

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## Day 9 (B)

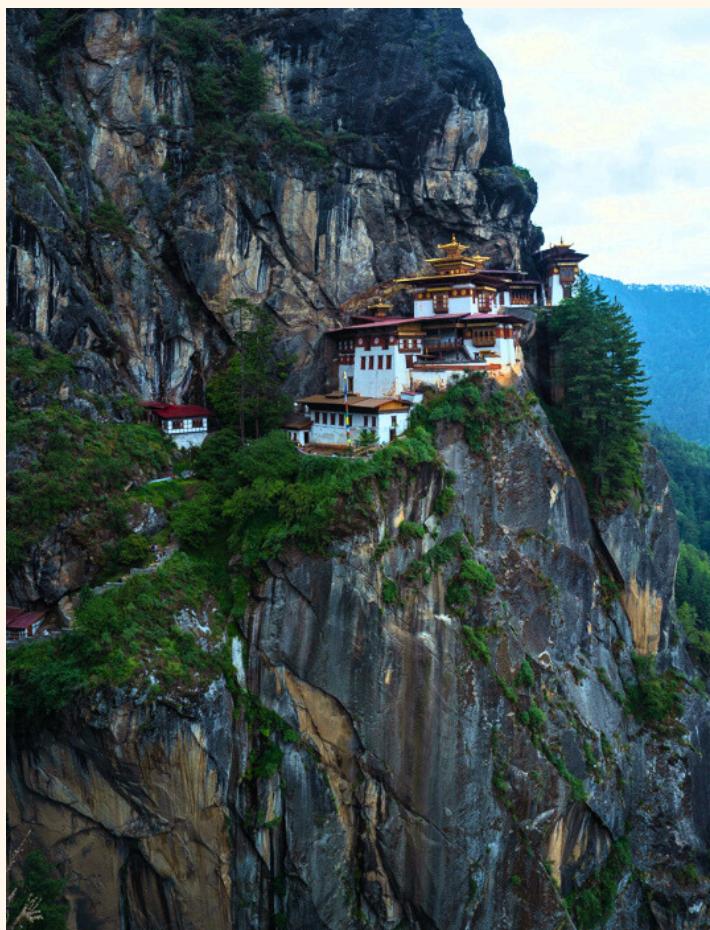
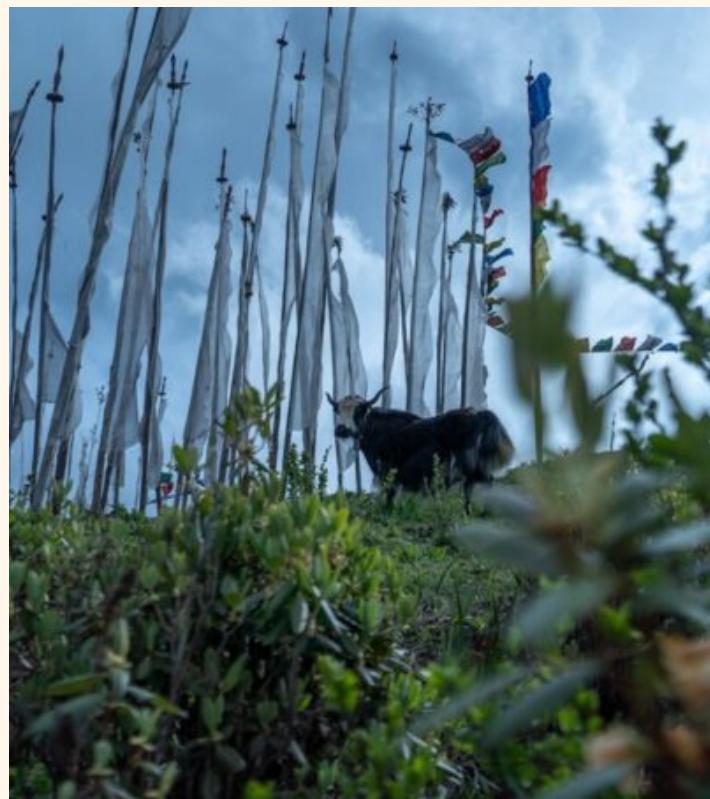
### Departure

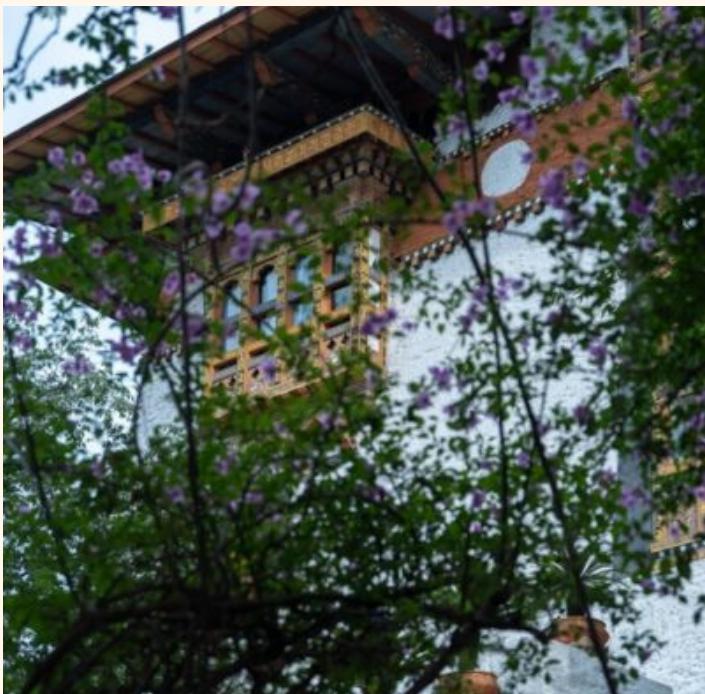
After breakfast at your hotel, your driver will take you to the airport for your return flight to Kathmandu.

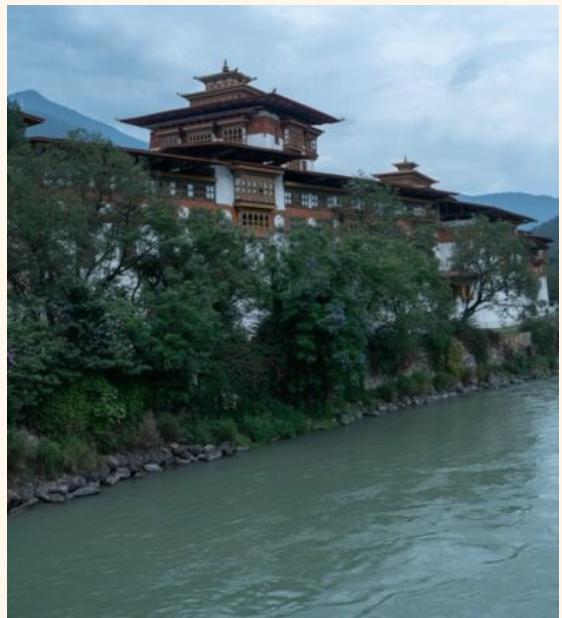


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## Images of Bhutan







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**MEALS INCLUDED: B - breakfast | L - lunch | D - dinner**

***The itinerary is a guide only and may change depending on conditions and local circumstances***



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**Costs:**

**USD 3,335 per person based on 2 pax**

**USD 3,135 per person based on 3 -6 pax**

**USD 3,035 per person based on 7-12 pax**

**Single Supplement USD 500**

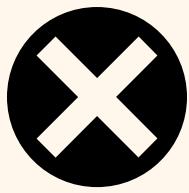
***Costs are valid until December 31st, 2027***

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**Tour cost includes:**

- Sustainable Tourism Fee/ Tourism Tax payable to govt. (US\$ 800 per person) payable to the Govt.
- Visa Fees (US\$ 40 per person) payable to the Department of Immigration
- Monument fees worth US\$ 200 payable to the Department of Culture
- All necessary park permits fees
- All transfers and sightseeing
- All meals and evening tea
- All accommodation in 3\* hotels and guest houses
- English-speaking tour leader and driver
- All inland transfers
- Complimentary hot-stone bath
- Domestic flight from Bumthang to Paro
- Round-trip airfare from Kathmandu in economy class
- Airport transfers in Kathmandu, Nepal



**Tour cost DOES NOT include:**

- Insurance
  - International flights to and from Kathmandu, Nepal
  - Nepali visa
  - Hotel accommodation in Kathmandu
  - All personal expenses like laundry, telephone, soft drinks, alcoholic beverages, shopping expenses etc.
  - Spa charges (except for the traditional hot-stone bath)
  - Pony hire for Tiger's Nest Monastery
  - Travel and medical insurance
  - Gratuities/tips
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