

**Monasteries of Bhutan**  
**8 days – 7 nights**  
**Thimphu, Phobjikha, Punakha, Ha, Paro, Tiger's Nest**  
**Architecture, Art, Culture, History**

**This program may be operated for individuals or for small groups**  
**This is a suggested itinerary**

*Once upon a time there was a small kingdom lost on the edge of the Himalayas, dancing between clouds and giant rhododendrons. Kneaded by the benevolent hand of the Buddha and the imperious influence of the great Tibet, the Drukyl, the "land of the dragon", nonetheless asserts its own voice,*

### **Day 1 Paro, Thimphu**

Welcome to Bhutan! We land at Paro International Airport after a spectacular flight with breathtaking views of the mountains. At the airport we meet our guide and our driver who take us through the valleys of Paro and Thimphu to the capital of Bhutan, Thimphu, at 7,600 feet above sea level. After a little rest and refreshments at the hotel, we head to Zaxhang a typical restaurant for lunch. In the afternoon we begin our city tour with the Temple of Buddha, where the tallest statue of the seated Buddha dominates the city. The Chorten Memorial is said to be the "most religious monument in Bhutan". People of all ages come around to recite prayers. A few minutes north of the city we visit the Tashichho Dzong. The seat of the government of Bhutan since 1952, it currently houses the throne room and the king's offices, the secretariat and the ministries of internal affairs and finance. It is also the home of the monastic body. In the evening we take a leisurely stroll through the city and in particular along the numerous stalls of the craft market. Dinner and accommodation at the hotel. [L/D]

### **Day 2: Thimphu (Cheri Monastery)**

In the morning, we drive 10 miles north of the Thimphu Valley and enjoy a short hike of 30 to 45 minutes to the monastery of Cheri. This monument, built in 1620 by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, is currently an important educational and meditative retreat center for the Drukpa Kagyu sect of the South. We continue our day at the learning center for Bhutanese artists: The School of Thirteen Arts and Crafts. You can specialize in one of the thirteen arts and crafts, including painting, weaving, sculpture, blacksmithing and even embroidery. It is the best place to discover the traditional art and crafts of Bhutan and you can observe students learning the different techniques taught at school. The Textile Museum is particularly interesting for learning the national art of weaving. We finally stroll in the Centenary Farmers Market (open from Thursday to Sunday). We return to Thimphu for dinner and overnight at the hotel. [B/D]

### **Day 3: Thimphu, Phobjikha**

After breakfast, we head to the Phobjikha valley, known for its vast wintering fields which serve as refuges for the black-necked cranes, rare and endangered in Bhutan. At around 9,830 feet above sea level, Phobjikha is a vast valley of humid alpine areas considered to be the largest and most important in the country. It is often cited for the harmonious coexistence of its inhabitants with nature and the valley also has great cultural significance. On the way we stop at the Dochula pass at 10,330 feet, decorated with 108 Druk Wangyel Chorten (stupas), which were built to celebrate stability and progress, brought to Bhutan by His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, fourth king. This pass is renowned for its spectacular views of the eastern Himalayan ranges. We leave to visit the Gangtey Monastery which dominates the wetlands dotted with farms and lush forests. We continue with a short walk on the natural paths of Gangtey (duration: 1 hour 30 minutes), considered to be among the most beautiful short courses in Bhutan. In the evening we visit a traditional village house. Dinner and overnight at the hotel. [B/D]

### **Day 4: Phobjikha, Punakha**

This morning we explore a little more the beautiful Gangtey Valley and its typical villages. Then, we take the road to Punakha. The Punakha Valley is a relatively warm region, almost tropical. Arriving in

Punakha, we explore Chimmi Lhakhang for a short 45-minute walk which leads us to the Temple of Fertility built in tribute to the Divine Madman Drukpa Kunley whose eccentric customs and practices inspired local folklore. This is where we can see phallic representations by the thousands! In the evening, we visit the magnificent Punakha dzong (fortress), established at the junction of the Pho Chu and Mo Chu rivers. It was in this palace-fortress that the first king was crowned. Not far from the fort, the suspension bridge promises to delight thrill seekers and photography lovers. We continue to the hotel for dinner and overnight. [B/D]

#### Day 5: Punakha, Ha

We head for one of the prettiest valleys in the country, but also one of the least developed: The Ha Valley. Local legend closely links the history of Ha to that of the Black and White temples: Lhakhang Nakpo and Lhakhang Karpo, which we set out to explore. We spend the rest of the day strolling through the village. Dinner and overnight at the hotel. [B/D]

#### Day 6: Ha, Paro

After our breakfast we take the road to Paro. On the way we explore the Chelela pass, which at more than 12,800 feet above sea level separates the valleys of Paro and Ha. The views of Mt. Jomolhari (over 22,965 feet) and the Tibetan border are breathtaking. In Paro we visit the royal museum, an old watchtower converted into a national museum and overlooking the Dzong of Paro. We visit the Paro Dzong, also called Rinpung Dzong, built in 1646 by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, the first spiritual and temporal sovereign of Bhutan. The Dzong shelters the monastic body of Paro as well as its administrative bodies. The approach to the Dzong is via a traditional covered bridge called Nemi Zam, which offers a superb view of the architectural wonder of the fortress as well as the life which surrounds it. In the evening, we have the choice between resting at our hotel or exploring the craft shops of the city and strolling through the alleys. Dinner and overnight at the hotel. [B/D]

#### Day 7: Paro (Tiger's Nest)

After our breakfast, we indulge in a rather sporty hike to reach the Tiger's Nest, the most picturesque icon and one of the main attractions in Bhutan. Taktshang's Tiger Nest takes place on the edge of a steep cliff, 985-foot above the Paro Valley. After lunch at a local restaurant, we pass by Kyichu Lhakhang, one of the oldest sacred shrines in the kingdom, whose creation dates back to the 7th century. In the evening we have the choice between resting at our hotel or exploring the craft shops of the city and strolling through the alleys. Dinner and overnight at the hotel. [B/L/D]

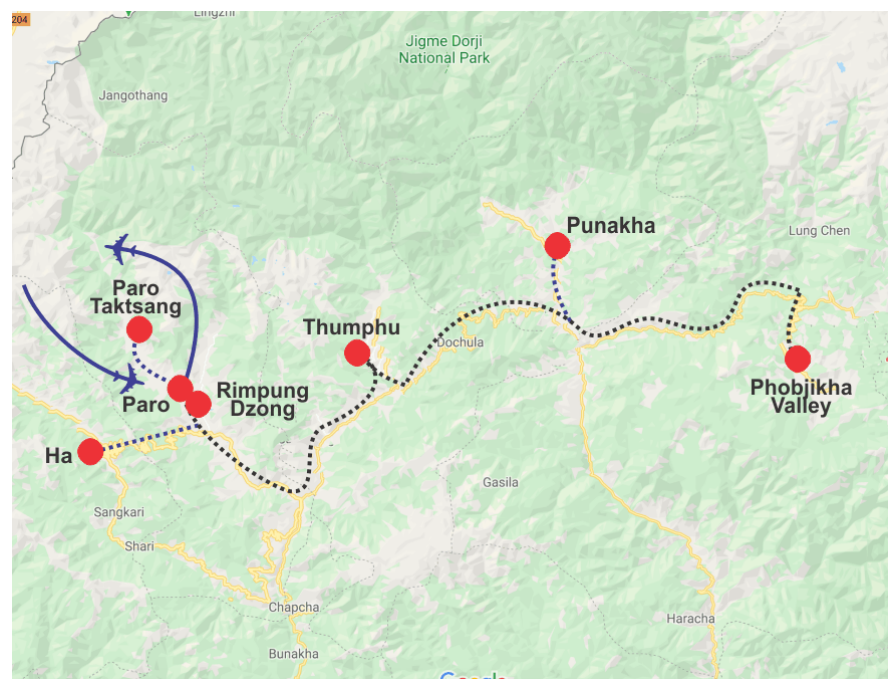
#### Day 8: Paro, USA

Depending on the flight schedule we may have some free time in Bhutan. At the appointed time our guide will transfer us to the airport to board our connecting flight home. [B]

[B] = Breakfast |

[L/D] = Lunch and Dinner |

[B/L/D] = Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner



**Your Tour includes**

- Arrival and departure. Transfers
- 7 nights' accommodation
  - Thimphu 2 nights
  - Phobjikha 1 night
  - Punakha 1 night
  - Ha 1 night
  - Paro 2 nights
- Meals
  - Breakfast daily
  - 2 lunches
  - 7 dinners
- Temple of Bddha
- Memorial Chorten
- Tashichho Dzong
- Cheri Monastery
- Dochula Pass
- Gangtey Monastery
- Temple of Fertility
- Punakha Fortress

- Black and White Temples
- Chelela Pass
- Rinpung Dzong
- Tiger's Nest
- Kyichu Lhakhang
- English-speaking driver/guide
- Transportation by A/C vehicle
- Entrance fees for sites visited
- All local taxes

**Tour does not include:**

- International or domestic airline tickets
- Taxes or surcharges related to airline tickets
- Travel insurance
- All alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks
- Other meals not mentioned in itinerary
- Extras and gratuities
- Early check-in, late check-out
- Expenses of personal nature

**Hotels in your Tour:**

Location	Accommodation Name	Tripadvisor
<b>Tourist Class</b>		
Thimphu	Hotel Norbuling	4.5
Probjikha	Odiyana Hotel	4
Punakha	Punatsangchhu Cottages	4
Ha	Hotel Heritage	4.5
Paro	Bhutan Spirit Sanctuary	5
<b>First Class</b>		
Thimphu	Gakyil	4.5
Probjikha	The Pema by Realm	5
Punakha	Hotel Vara	4
Ha	Hotel Heritage	4.5
Paro	Naksel Boutique Hotel & Spa	4,5
<b>Deluxe</b>		
Thimphu	Taj Tashi	5
Probjikha	Dusit D2 Yarkay Thimphu	5
Punakha	Zhingkhram Hotel	4
Ha	Hotel Lhayul	5
Paro	Le Meridien Paro, Riverfront	4,5

Hotels will be confirmed at time of booking

**Tour Prices:**

These programs can be customized for individuals and groups. Changes to this program may be requested by phone (1855-55-TOURS) or using the web FIT Quote Request

• **Airfare**

We also be glad to add the necessary airfare from your gateway so you take advantage of our special discounted leisure fares

- **Program**

You may add or remove;

- Trip days
- Cities and sites
- Meals

- **Other options**

- The program was designed with private services, however, we may substitute shared sightseeing where available
- If you prefer deluxe services we may operate this program including private driver, private guide and concierge service.

- **Quotation**

Once we have designed the program the way you want we'll give you a quote within 2 business days.

**Tour Code:** BT01PBH20ET

**Options:**

- Lunches and dinners can be arranged for individuals, families and groups at top restaurants or any restaurant requested by you.
- We can revise the itinerary to spend more time and provide more depth in those areas that you are interested on.
- Any other changes to the itinerary will be accommodated depending on the facilities available in the area.

**Group Quotations**

- If you wish to use these programs for your group or as the basis for a customized journey please either call us (1-855-55-TOURS or use the web Group Quote Request.
- In either case our specialists will work with to refine all the details and they will get you a quote with 2 business days. Quotes may be obtained for the air and land portions of just for the land journey.
- Booking both air and land with us will represent savings for you because of our buying power and longtime relationship with the airlines.
- We will also may have the choice between regular fares and special leisure fares not available to the public.