



DRUK TRAVEL SERVICE



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services

Local experts for



## A cultural encounter.

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**BUTHAN | 7DAYS / 6NIGHTS**

Route: From and to Paro

Type of tour: Culture

## TOUR OVERVIEW

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High in the mysterious and majestic eastern Himalayas, nestled between the Tibetan autonomous region of China and India, lies the small Kingdom of Bhutan, increasingly renowned for one of the Earth's most precious unspoiled spots. This tour explores ancient monasteries and shrines of historical and archaeological interests in the heartland of three major towns of the Dragon Kingdom. The guests will discover a magical place that speaks of a Buddhist culture in the daily lives of its people. They will see the spectacular mountain scenery that provides a backdrop to pristine forests and picturesque valleys. This breathtaking landscape is dotted with fluttering prayer flags, colourful farmhouses amidst terraced fields and impressive monasteries clinging to impossible cliffs. Guests will have the chance to see Taktsang Lakhang, one of the most famous and sacred of Bhutan's monasteries as well as the National Library of Bhutan in Thimphu, the capital. Visits of Punakha Valley and Punakha Dzong, known as The Palace of Happiness, are all organized. This memorable trip will be kept in the hearts of the adventurer for a lifetime.

## DAY BY DAY

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### DAY 1 | PARO – THIMPHU

The flight to Paro is one of the most spectacular in the entire Himalayas. Flying along the Himalayan range from Kathmandu, the journey offers fascinating views and an exciting descent into the Kingdom. After baggage collection, a representative will meet and transfer the guests to Thimphu, the capital city of Bhutan. En route to Thimphu, we make a stop at Chuzom, the confluence of Thimphu and Paro rivers. On arrival to Thimphu, check in to the hotel before an evening of an exploratory walk around Thimphu's main streets and market area.

- **Overnight stay in Thimphu. Dinner included.**

### DAY 2 | THIMPHU

After breakfast, there will be sightseeing in Thimphu valley, including a visit to the National Library of Bhutan, the Institute for Zorig Chusum (commonly known as the Painting School) where students undergo a six-year training course in Bhutan's 13 traditional arts and crafts, and a visit to the Textile Museum, a fascinating testimony of the Bhutanese traditions. The tour will then pause for lunch, then resume at the King's Memorial Chorten. The memorial is continuously circumnavigated by people, murmuring mantras and spinning prayer wheels. The construction of this landmark was the idea of Bhutan's third king, His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuk, "the father of modern Bhutan," who wished to erect a monument to world peace and prosperity. Completed in 1974, it serves both as a memorial to the late king and as a monument to peace. Continue on to Simply Bhutan, a museum created to observe the conservation of Bhutanese culture and tradition, which portrays ancient Bhutanese architecture. The structure is built from old timber, window, door frames and other items from traditional demolished houses. Later, you will be driven to Trashichhoedzong, "the fortress of the glorious religion," built in 1641 by the political and religious unifier of Bhutan, Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. The building was built in the 1960s in a traditional Bhutanese manner, without nails or architectural plans and is the centre for government, religion and the site of the monarch's throne, Je Khenpo or Chief Abbot. Next, take a drive to Buddha Point, located at a short drive from Thimphu city centre. Here, you can get a good overview of the Thimphu Valley and an opportunity to pay your obeisance and offer prayers to the Buddha, the largest statue in the country. The evening will be spent strolling through the Handicrafts Emporium and local crafts bazaars. Enjoy fine examples of Bhutan's traditional art, such as hand-woven textiles, thangka paintings, masks, ceramics, slate and wood carvings and jewellery.

- **Overnight stay in Thimphu on a half-board basis.**

### DAY 3 | THIMPHU – PUNAKHA

After breakfast at hotel, your tour will begin with a drive to Punakha via Dochula Pass some 3,080m above sea level. The passes are marked by a large Bhutanese Chorten and prayer flag. Dochula Pass offers the most spectacular view over the high peaks of the eastern Himalayas on a clear day. Once in Punakha, there will be the hotel check-in before proceeding to visit Punakha Dzong. In the afternoon, hike along the banks of the Mo Chhu to Khamsum Yuelley Namgyal Chorten, a stunning monument recently built by the Queen and consecrated in 1999. The hike takes the guests through fields of chillies, cabbages and rice. In the evening, spend time exploring Punakha village located right on the bank of river.

- **Overnight stay in Punakha on a half-board basis.**

### DAY 4 | PUNAKHA

After breakfast at the hotel is a visit to Sangchhen Dorji Lhuendrup Lhakhang Temple. This intriguing nunnery gleams magnificently on a ridge amid pine trees and overlooks the valleys of Punakha and Wangdue Phodrang. The temple houses a 14-foot bronze statue of Avalokiteshvara. Other statues that can be found in the temple include those of Guru Padmasambawa, Gautama Buddha, Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel, Tsela Namsum and the 21 Taras and Tsepamay

(Buddha of longevity). The Avalokiteshvara statue, one of the biggest in the country, was the handiwork of a local Bhutanese artisans. The temple complex also houses a permanent higher learning and meditation centre for nuns where, apart from religious trainings, it provides life skill training such as tailoring, embroidery, statue making and thangka painting. Later in the day, walk to Chimi Lhakhang, where it is widely believed that if couples who cannot have children pray at this temple, they will be blessed with a child very soon after. The walk takes the tour through rice fields and the tiny settlement of Pana, meaning 'field', where the tour will see a rare glimpse into the daily life of the villagers of Pana.

- **Overnight stay in Punakha on a half-board basis.**

## DAY 5 | PUNAKHA – PARO

After breakfast, drive back to Paro descending back down from Dochu La, follow the way back up the dramatic Wang Chhu and Paro Chhu river valleys, before crossing through Paro town towards the north end of the valley. En route will be a visit to Simtokha Dzong, the place of profound tantric teaching. This dzong now houses a Dzongkha language school. Once at Paro, check in into the hotel and then proceed to visit Ta Dzong, originally built as watchtower but now houses the National Museum. The extensive collections in the National Museum includes antique thangkha paintings, textiles, weapons, armour, household objects and a rich assortment of natural and historic artefacts. After the Ta Dzong visit will be a short walk down the trail to visit Rinpung Dzong, meaning "fortress of the heap of jewels". Rinpung Dzong has a long and fascinating history, the wooden galleries that line the inner courtyard display fine wall paintings of teachings.

- **Overnight stay in Paro on a half-board basis.**

## DAY 6 | PARO

After breakfast will be a five-hour walk to Taktsang Monastery. It is said that Guru Rinpoche arrived to the monastery on the back of a tigress and meditated. This site is recognised as sacred place that was visited by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal in 1646. On the return back to Paro there will be several stops. The first will be at Drukgyel Dzong, a ruined fortress where Bhutanese warriors fought Tibetan invaders centuries ago. Then, the Dome of Chomolhari, "mountain of goddess". After, the tour will visit 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. On the return to Paro, take the opportunity to explore the streets and market place of Paro in the evening.

- **Overnight stay in Paro on a half-board basis.**

## DAY 7 | PARO

After an early breakfast at the hotel, transfer to the airport where our representative will help you with departure formalities and then bid you farewell.

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### END OF SERVICES

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## INCLUDED

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### TOUR GUIDE:

- Local English-speaking guides – (other languages on request)

### ACCOMMODATION:

- Overnight in hotels on a half-board basis

### ENTRANCE FEES AND ACTIVITIES:

- All entrance fees - Single visit only

### TRANSPORT:

- Private transfers and sightseeing as per itinerary

### OTHERS:

- Bhutan visa fee

## NOT INCLUDED

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- Tips and personal expenses
- Video camera fee at monuments
- Meals and drinks - Not listed
- Arrival and departure flights and insurance