

9Days BHUTAN TOUR

DAY 01 KUALA LUMPUR - BANGKOK

Fly into the land of smiling and one night in Bangkok. Free activities.

DAY 02 BANGKOK - PARO – THIMPHU (L,D)

Fly into Paro on our national carrier Druk air. In clear weather magnificent views of the world's highest peak give way to the lush green Paro valley as you land. The first gift from Bhutan will be the cool, cleanfresh air as you step out of the plane – a befitting introduction to the spectacular beauty of Bhutan. A 45 min drive brings one to Thimphu, the modern capital of Bhutan, made up of just three main streets. It is the only capital in the world without traffic lights; check in at Hotel Jumolhari for lunch. After lunch, we will first visit the National Memorial Chorten which was built in honor of the late King Jigme Dorji Wangchuk and Changangkha Lhakhang which is an old fortress like temple and mostic school perched on a ridge above Thimphu, south-east of Motithang. It was established in the 12th century on a site chosen by Lama Phajo Drukgom Shigpo, who came from Ralung in Tibet. The central statue is Chenresig in an 11-headed manifestation, and the books in the temple are larger in size than usual Tibetan texts. There is an excellent view of Thimphu from the courtyard.

DAY 03 THIMPHU – PUNAKHA (B,L,D)

We will head on to Punakha, the ancient capital of Bhutan in the morning. The roads bring visitors through scented pine and cedar forests, festooned with hanging lichen. Dochula Pass at 3,050m offers a panoramic view of the Himalayan mountain ranges if the weather is clear, about an hour into our journey. This beautiful pass with its 108 Bhutanese Stupas is the memorial site of fallen Bhutanese soldiers in the 1990s. We would then descend along a series of hairpin bends onto the fertile valley of Punakha. Approaching Punakha, we will check in a Hotel Meri Puensum for lunch. A short drive will bring us to the magnificent Punakha Dzong, the winter seat of the Je Khenpo and the Monk Body, remarkably located between the rivers of the Mo (Female) Chu and Pho (Male) Chu. Slightly north of the Punakha valley is the Khamsum Yuele Chorten. The 45 minute trek up to the stupa, a small one is a good light exercise, coupled with the freshest air. In the evening, we return to Meri Puensum for dinner where we would enjoy the light breeze of the Punakha valley in peace and tranquility.

DAY 04 PUNAKHA – BUMTHANG (B,L,D)

In the morning we would start 7 hour drive to central Bhutan, passing Wangdue, one of the major towns and district capital of Western Bhutan. We will pause to view the Wangduephodrang Dzong. Dramatically perched on the spur of a hill, built in 1638, this Dzong overlooks the confluence of the Tsang Chu and Dang Chu rivers. Lunch is near Trongsa, followed by a visit to the Trongsa Dzong, the ancestral home of the ruling dynasty. En route to Bumthang is Pelela pass with its alpine environment of rhododendrons and dwarf bamboo. This pass is traditionally considered the boundary between West and East Bhutan. Toilet opportunity! After the pass, we will reach Bumthang Valley, also known as the "Switzerland of Asia" for its tranquil serenity. Welcome to Bumthang, a massive valley of apple trees. Crunch on one of these freshly plucked apples to savour the amazing taste of authentic alpine apples, dense and juicy.

DAY 05 BUMTHANG**(B,L,D)**

Bumthang the valley of monasteries, this is one of the most spectacular valleys in Bhutan and also the heartland of Buddhism in Bhutan. It is an area with a wide variety of fauna and flora. The Guru Rinpoche and his lineage of Tertons (Treasure finders) making Bumthang his home have led to more than 40 temples being built in this peaceful valley. In the morning, we will hike to the Tamshing Gompa, built in 1501 by the Buddhist saint Pema Lingpa. We will also visit Kurjey Lhakhang, one of the most sacred monasteries in Bhutan. Built by the Guru Rinpoche in 1652, it houses a rock with his body imprint; Legend has it that Guru Rinpoche manifested as Garuda to defeat the demon Sheliging Karpo who had taken the form of a white lion. We will also visit Jambay Lhakhang, built in 659 by Tibetan King Sontsen Gampo to pin down a demon who was obstructing the spread of Buddhism. Come October, the Jambay Lhakhang Drup is one of the most colourful festivals in Bhutan. In the afternoon, we will hike up to Thangbi valley crossing a suspension bridge to visit the Thangbi Lhakhang built in the 14th century via an unpaved road.

DAY 06 BUMTHANG – WANGDUEPHODRANG**(B,L,D)**

Should you have more time in Bhutan, Bumthang is peppered with many short treks around the region. Overnight treks will also allow you to put up at the yak herb camp. The drive to Wangdue takes about 5 hours via Gangtey. Gangtey lies towards the East of Punakha and Wangdue on the flank of the Black Mountains, Gangtey Gompa is an old monastery that was built in the 17th century. A few kilometers past the Gompas on the valley floor is the fascinating valley of Phobjikha, the gentle sloping hillsides of Phobjikha are described as “the most beautiful valley in the Himalayas”. This is the winter home of black-necked cranes that migrate from arid plains in the north to pass winter in milder and lower climate.

DAY 07 WANGDUE TO PARODAY PARO**(B,L,D)**

Wake up to the sounds of nature in the morning, enjoy the fresh air of a valley where time stands still as you meditate on the goodness of the world. We relish the sights and sounds of the Wangdue and return to Paro. Count the number of Prayer Wheels; be amazed by the sheer number! Prayer wheels are powered by water to keep the wheel in perpetual motion, in constant supplication and prayer. This helps to keep the valley of Bhutan happy and safe. Overnight stay at Olathang Hotel, overlooking the valley plains of Paro awaits us as we enjoy a beautiful sunset, with the rays of the sun kissing the tips of trees as farmers return home from the field.

DAY 08 PARO**(B,L,D)**

A morning drive, north of Paro for the hike to the Taktsang monastery, the 1.5 hour hike to the cafeteria is also a vantage view whereby you can enjoy the stunning view of the monastery. Prayer flags adorn the cliffs and this is also where Guru Padmasambhava landed on the back of a tigress in the 8th century. Special lunch will be arranged. After a sumptuous local lunch, drive toward the ruins of Drukgyel Dong, Built in 1647 by the great Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, father and unifier of medieval Bhutan, the Dzong was destroyed by an accidental fire and left in ruins as an evocative reminder of the great victories it was built to commemorate. On the way back we will retrace our steps to visit Kyichu Lhakhang, one of the oldest temples in Bhutan. The evening ends with a walk through Paro’s main shopping district.

DAY 09 PARO – BANGKOK – KUALA LUMPUR**(B)**

We bid a fond farewell to Bhutan for the flight back to Kuala Lumpur via Bangkok.