

Trip Duration – 05 Nights and 06 Days

Trip Route: Both Entry & Exit from Paro International Airport (**Paro - Thimphu - Punakha (Western Bhutan Trip)**)

Highlights: (World tallest bronze Buddha statue, Majestic Punakha fortress, Punakha valley, Beautiful Phobjikha village, Spectacular tiger-nest temple, some of the old temples and fortress, Scenic drives and photographing)

Trip Style – Multi Activity

Trip Durations: 05 Nights 06 Days

Bhutan, officially the Kingdom of Bhutan is a landlocked country in South Asia. Located in the Eastern Himalaya, it is bordered by Tibet Autonomous Region of China in the North and India to the South, East and West. Bhutan is geopolitically in South Asia and is the region's second least populous nation after the Maldives. Bhutan got approximately 800,000 populations, where 70% of them are farmers. Bhutan's is an underdeveloped country with a small economy, but education, health care, medical consultation, medical treatment and medicines are all provided by the state. Renewable Hydropower is the highest income generator and next comes tourism. **Thimphu** is its capital and largest city, while **Phuntsholing** is its financial center.



Paro International Airport

The independence of Bhutan has endured for centuries and it has never been colonized in its history. Situated on the ancient Silk Road between Tibet, the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia, the Bhutanese state developed a distinct national identity based on Buddhism. Headed by a spiritual leader known as the **Zhabdrung Rinpoche**, the territory was composed of many fiefdoms and governed as a Buddhist theocracy. Following a civil war in the 19th century, the House of **Wangchuck dynasty** reunited the country and established relations with the British Empire. Bhutan fostered a strategic partnership with India. In 2008, it transitioned from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy and held the first election to the National Assembly of Bhutan. The National Assembly of Bhutan is part of the bicameral parliament of the Bhutanese democracy.

Day 01: Arrival in Paro Airport and then drive towards Thimphu

The flight into Paro, Bhutan is one of the most spectacular in the world, which provides the great view of the Himalayan snow-capped mountains hiding behind the clouds, beautiful valleys with terraced rice fields and mountains terrains covered with forests and magnificent monasteries and temples. The landing at Paro International Airport has been described by many people as breathtaking. Conversely, the tiny airstrip situated a mile and a half above sea level has also been described as completely terrifying and is roundly regarded as one of the most challenging airports to land in the world. The Bhutan is known to its natives as **Druk-Yul** (Land of the Thunder Dragon). It is regarded as the **Last Paradise** on earth.

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Our **Bhutan EverAce Travel** representative will meet you at Paro International Airport exit door following customs formalities then drive towards Thimphu which takes approximately 1:00 hour. En route to Thimphu, visit **Tachog Temple**. In 14th century, a renowned bridge builders, **Thangthong Gyalpo** came to Bhutan at the request of the deities **Ap Chundu** of Haa valley and **Jowo Darkey** of Paro valley respectively. **Thangthong Gyalpo** was the man who built the iron chain bridges in Bhutan, and is said to have built 108 of these bridges around Tibet and Bhutan. Many of them are still in use today, showing how strong and durable the bridges are.

After freshening up for an hour in the hotel, you can **discuss the tour program with your tour guide and start the sightseeing.**



14th Century iron bridge built by Thangthong Gyalpo

Thimphu, (alt. 2,250m / 7,380ft.) **Bhutan's Capital City**, occupies a valley in the country's western interior. In addition to being the government seat, the city is known for its Buddhist sites as well. Thimphu is the most modern city in Bhutan with abundance restaurants, internet café, nightclubs and shopping centers. The Kingdom's capital city is home to approximately one hundred fifty thousand inhabitants including the **Royal Family of Bhutan**. One of the most curious features of Thimphu is that, it is the only city in the world that does not have **traffic lights, billboards, KFC and McDonald**.

Takin Preserve Centre (Mini Zoo) - The **Takin** (*Burdocastaxicolor*) is a vulnerable subspecies of Takin native to Bhutan, North Eastern India, Western part of China, and Tibet. The Takin was declared as the national animal of Bhutan on 25th November, 2005 due to its strong association with the country's religious history and mythology, its native to Bhutan and it's an endangered animal with unique features. After visiting the preserve centre, we are going to hike short and refreshing **Ancient Takin trail** which is adjacent to the centre.

Wangditse Goenpa Hike - In the afternoon, we are going to do a short nature hike. Along the way, there are good views of the fortress and its vicinity. The trail goes straight up the ridge. After about 500m, the trail levels out while crossing an open ridge with a field of prayer flags. The views of the city are excellent from here. It leads through open grassy areas, oak undergrowth and blue pines. (Hikes take approximately 2:00 hours to and fro)

Bhutanese Traditional Handmade Paper Factory - the factory uses traditional methods to produce the authentic Bhutanese paper known as **Deh-sho**. The factory continue to preserve and promote this age- old Bhutanese tradition. The factory uses the bark of two species, the **Daphne** tree and **Dhekup** tree in the manufacture of traditional paper. Visitors can absorb the entire process of producing handmade paper using ancient traditional methods that have been practiced for generation. Deh-sho paper was originally used by monasteries for woodblock and manuscript books and also for writing prayer books.

The 3rd King's Memorial Chorten (Stupa) - It was built in the memory of the **third King of Bhutan** (the father of modern Bhutan), who reigned from 1952-1972)

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Thimphu Memorial Chorten (stupa)

Buddha Dordenma Statue - This massive statue of Buddha Shakyamuni measures in at a height of 51.5 meters, making it one of the **largest statues of Buddha** in the world. The statue is made of bronze and is gilded with gold. **125, 000 smaller Buddha statues** have been placed within the Buddha Dordenma statue. The statue fulfills an ancient prophecy dating back to the 8th century A.D that was discovered by Terton Pema Lingpa (Religious Treasure Discoverer) and is said to emanate an aura of peace and happiness to the entire world.



51.5M Buddha Dordenma Statue in Thimphu

Evening time can be spent strolling through the government-run **Handicraft Emporium and Local Crafts Bazaar**, to browse through example of Bhutan's fine traditional arts. Here you can buy hand-woven textiles, thangka paintings, masks, ceramics, slate and woodcarvings, jewellery, interesting items made from local materials.

Overnight at hotel in Thimphu

Day 02: Sightseeing in Thimphu 2,250m / 7,380ft.

In the morning, we will drive towards **Dodina** (alt. 2600m/8,762ft.), which takes approximately half an hour drive from the city. A walk of about 2:00 hours to and fro approximately, that leads to the beautiful **Cheri-Goemba** (2,850m). The trail starts by crossing a lovely covered bridge that spans the Wang Chhu, and then climbs steeply to the monastery. Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, the founder of Bhutan built this goemba in 1620 and established the first monk body here. A silver chorten inside the goemba holds the ashes of the Shabdrung's father. Hike to the Cheri monastery is really stunning.

Centenary Farmers Market - it's a place where proud villagers behind pyramids of their agricultural produces greet you with stone weights in their hands and smiles on their faces. It is interesting to see what may seem to you as 'wired vegetables and forest products' that actually enriches the Bhutanese palate.

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Simply Bhutan Museum - is an interactive **“Living Museum”** that gives a good guided introduction to various aspects of Bhutanese traditional life. Visitors get to learn how to distil **Ara** (home brewed local wine), dress up in traditional clothes, try out archery and hear songs sung by Bhutanese women as they build houses out of rammed earth. It’s a good family experience. There are also souvenir shops and a snack bar. You can even try **“typical Bhutanese Cuisines”** at simply Bhutan restaurant with some cultural program.

Overnight at hotel in Thimphu

Day 03: Thimphu to Punakha 1,300m / 4,260ft. (2:00 hours drive)

Punakha (alt. 1,300m / 4,260ft.) is located in the low sub-tropical valley about 4300 feet and was the capital of Bhutan until 1955. It is still the winter home of the Chief Abbot of Bhutan and the Central Monastic Body. The warmer climate in Punakha allows to produce abundant crops and fruits like oranges, mangos, bananas and we can even see cactuses.

Head out of a town on a spectacular 2:00 hours drive to Punakha crossing the **Dochu-La Pass** (3,150 meters approximately) from where you can see the 108 beautiful Chortens (Stupas) built by Her Majesty the Queen Mother, **Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck** in 2004 to exemplify the greatness of the fourth King. From this pass, on a clear day, you can have a wonderful view of the highest peaks of Bhutan. After a hot cup of tea at a café atop the pass, then we continue our drive towards Punakha Valley.



Dochu-La Pass 3,150 Meters

En-route an hour walk through paddy fields brings us to **Chimi Lhakhang (temple)**. The temple is dedicated to Lama **Drukpa Kuenley**, a Tibetan Buddhist Saint known popularly as **“Divine Madman”** and considered a folk hero in Bhutan for his unconventional ways. This temple is known as the temple of fertility. It is widely believed that couples who do not have children and wanting one, if they pray at the temple, they are usually blessed with wooden Phallus in order to get pregnant. (Hiking to the temple going to take approximately 2:00 hours to and fro)

Sangchhen Dorji Lhuendrup Nunnery - which is perched on a hilltop overlooking the beautiful Punakha valley and Wangduephodrang valley. Surrounded by rich lush green pine forest, the nunnery complex is a true expression of Bhutanese architecture portraying strong traditional values. The temple houses a **14-foot bronze statue of Avalokiteshvara** (God of Compassion with thousand hands and thousand eyes). The statue of Avalokiteshvara which is claimed to be the biggest in the country was handmade by local Bhutanese artisans. The nunnery was built as a Buddhist College for nuns and currently houses about 120 nuns. Apart from religious schooling, the centre also strives to provide life skills such as tailoring, embroidery, sculpting and Buddhist thangka painting.

Then visit the most beautiful **Punthang Dechenphordang**, which means the “**fortress of great bliss**”. It was built in 1637 by founder of Bhutan, Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. It stands majestically between the two rivers **Pho Chhu** and **Mo Chhu (male and female rivers)**. The Punakha Dzong is an architectural wonder and has played a prominent role in the civil and religious life of the kingdom. The Dzong has been destroyed four times by fire, earthquake and flood. The Dzong now is fully restored to its original splendor.



Night view of the magnificent Punakha fortress

Later in the evening, walk to the **fascinating longest suspension bridge** in Bhutan, where you can soak up with cool breezes from the male river.

If guests are interested to experience **adventurous white river rafting**, then we arrange it in Punakha.

Overnight at hotel in Punakha

Day 04: Punakha to Paro 2,200m / 7,216ft. 3:00 hours drive)

In the morning, visit **Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten** before heading towards Paro valley. It takes almost an hour to reach the temple from Punakha town. Perched atop the hill overlooking terraced fields of Punakha valley, hiking to the **Chorten-shaped temple** is one of the favored things to do in Punakha valley. Hiking through the verdant hill sprawled with emerald green meadow and crossing the thunderous mountain stream by walking on the suspension bridge to reach the layered temple has hyped the interest of many travelers. **Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten** was built in 1990, under the instruction of the Queen Mother. It was dedicated for the Dragon King and for the well-being of the scenic Kingdom of Bhutan. Hikes takes approximately 2:00 hours (to and fro)



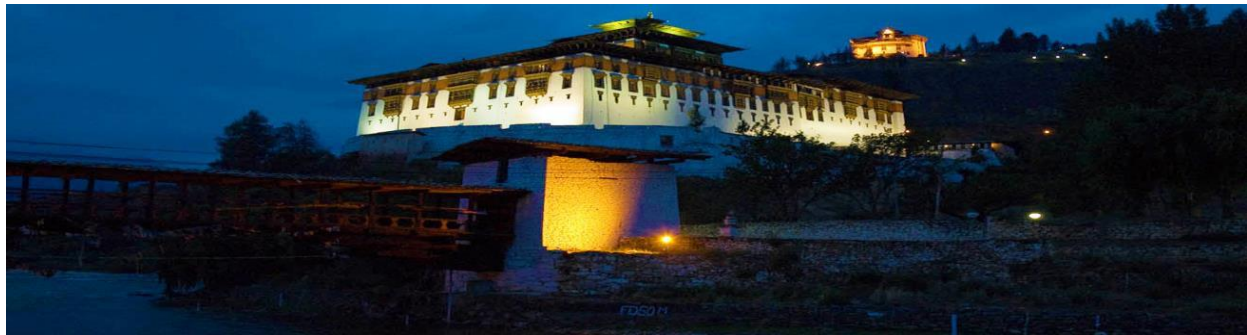
Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten

After lunch, drive to **Paro valley** (alt. 2,200m/7,216ft.) from Punakha takes 3:00 hours approximately. Paro valley extends from the confluence of the Paro Chhu and the Wang Chhu rivers at Chuzom up to **Mt. Jomolhari** at the Tibetan border to the North. This picturesque region is one of the widest valleys in the kingdom and is covered in fertile rice fields and has a beautiful, crystalline river meandering down the

valley. One of the distinctive features of Paro town is that it is situated in a flat valley bottom and follows a grid-like pattern. The central plaza is adorned with a large prayer wheel and a small amphitheater where events are held throughout the year. There are over 155 temples and monasteries in the area, some dating as far back as the 7th century. The country's first and only **International airport** is also located in the region. Its close proximity to the historical and religious sites in the region has resulted in the development of an array of luxurious, high-end tourist resorts making Paro one of the main destination for visitors. The region contains one of Bhutan's most iconic landmark, **Taksang Monastery**, "the Tiger's Nest". This awe-inspiring temple was constructed upon a sheer cliff face, above forests of oak and rhododendrons.

Visit the **Paro Rinpung Dzong**, which means "**The Fortress on a Heap of jewels**" was built in 1644 by the founder of Bhutan. The fort was used on numerous occasions to defend the Paro valley from invasions by Tibet. The British political officer John Claude White reported that in 1905 there were old catapults for throwing great stones stored in the rafters of the Dzong's verandah. The Dzong survived the 1897 earthquake but was severely damaged by fire in 1907.

The interesting side note: **Scenes from Bernardo Bertolucci's "Little Buddha" (1995)** were filmed here.



Paro Rinpung Dzong (fortress on heap of jewels)

Ta Dzong (Watch Tower) - The cylindrical building was built in 1651 AD by Desi Tenzin Drukda, the then Governor of Paro. It was built as a watch-tower to overlook Paro valley and Rinpong Dzong, since the invasions were occasional during those days. After the arrival of modernism in the country, the Royal Government of Bhutan, with the aim to show-case country's rich cultural and traditions, initiated the idea to introduce a museum for the first time and in 1968, the watch-tower turned into the **National Museum of Bhutan**. The museum was closed to public following the damage to the building caused by September 18th 2011 earthquake. It was renovated with the support from the India government and was reopened to public on 24th June, 2020.

The Kichu Lhakhang - one of the Bhutan's oldest and most beautiful temples, originally built in the 7th by the Tibetan Emperor Songsten Gampo, to pin down the left foot of a giant ogress who was thwarting the establishment of Buddhism into Tibet. Elderly pilgrims constantly walk around the temple spinning its many prayer wheels.

In the evening, strolling around the beautiful Paro market and shopping.

Overnight at hotel in Paro

Day 05: Hike to Tiger-Nest 3,100m /10,230ft. (Approximately 6:00 hours hike to and fro)

"Hike going to be fantastic, the views spectacular and the tiger temple breathtaking". It's really worthy if you can make it to the temple. Cheers!!

We have saved the best of Bhutan for the last. Today we will experience Bhutan’s most valued attractions, and perhaps one of the major highlights of your trip. **No trip to Bhutan would be complete without a visit to this remarkable heritage site.** An excursion to the famous **Taksang Monastery** which literally means “Tiger’s-Nest”. Its going to take minimum 6:00 hours hike (to and fro).

Bhutan's most famous monastery situated at 3,100 meters. **Guru Rinpoche (Spiritual Master)** is said to have flown on the back of a tigress to meditate in a cave where Taktsang Monastery now stands. The monastery is perched on the edge of a steep cliff, about 900 meters above Paro Valley. The temple 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 clergy. After having explored the monastery, hike down to the valley floor.



Taktsang temple (tiger nest)

In the evening, visit Farm House and experience **typical Bhutanese dinner** and **herbal hot stone bath**.

Overnight at hotel in Paro

Day 06: Departure from Paro International Airport

After breakfast at your hotel, you will be transferred to the airport depending on your flight schedule and your destination. Our representative will bid you farewell.

Note - Tour itinerary is very flexible. We can customize it whenever necessary!!

Brief Outline Program

DAY	FROM	TO	Overnight stays	No. of Night
1	Paro	Thimphu	Thimphu	2 Nights
2	Thimphu	Thimphu		
3	Thimphu	Punakha	Punakha	1 Night
4	Punakha	Paro	Paro	2 Nights
5	Paro	Paro		
6	Paro	Departure (Kathmandu)		

Thanks for giving an opportunity to host you in Bhutan

Enjoy your stay!!